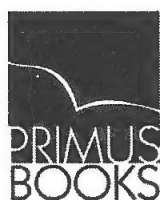


SINDIAS —AND— THE RAJ

Princely Gwalior c.1800–1850

AMAR FAROOQUI



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AMAR FAROOQUI

Abbreviations

BCSO	Board of Customs, Salt and Opium
CIA	Central India Agency Records
DR	'F. Dangerfield's Report' (3 October 1820, SR, 18/1 December 1820)
FD	Foreign Department
FD Misc	Foreign Department, Miscellaneous
FDP	Foreign Department, Political
<i>IESHR</i>	<i>The Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
IL	Indore Letters, FD Misc, NAI
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library
PLB	Poona Residency, Inward Letter Books, Maharashtra State Archives
<i>PRC</i>	<i>Poona Residency Correspondence</i>
RD	Revenue Department, Maharashtra State Archives
SR	Separate Revenue Branch Consultations, NAI



Introduction

ONE OF THE LEADING princely states of the British Indian empire, Gwalior belonged (along with Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore and Baroda) to the exclusive club of the 'big five' entitled to a twenty-one gun salute. This honour was a recognition of its size (it was among the largest princely states by area) and strategic location, its historical importance as the principal Maratha state at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Anglo-Maratha struggle entered its final stage, and—what was a crucial consideration in the post-Revolt period—the loyalty of the ruling family in 1857.

The making of princely Gwalior was a historical process whereby the state became an integral part of the British Indian empire under an arrangement known loosely as 'indirect rule'. It gradually acquired the status of a 'native state' *within* the empire in the early nineteenth century. The term 'princely state' (hence, the somewhat incongruous 'princely Gwalior') is used in preference to 'native state' in the hope that the inferiority connoted by the colonial label 'native' might be avoided. Be that as it may, there was no ready-made formula for converting an independent political entity of the subcontinent into a 'native state of India'. The imperial relationship with princely states was an evolving one, requiring continuous negotiation; it was only towards the end of the century that the status of respective princely states was sought to be fixed. The Delhi Durbar of 1877 organized by Lord Lytton, which was an assemblage of princely rulers both big and

small, became an occasion for systematizing the relationship between the princely states and the British—in fact, one of the earliest attempts to do so.¹ William Lee-Warner's *The Native States of India*, published in 1910, articulated the colonial interpretation of the constitutional position thus:

The sources from which the rules or principles that govern British relations with the native states can be drawn, are first of all the Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads, entered into with them; secondly, the decisions passed from time to time by the paramount power in matters of succession, intervention, or of dispute with their rulers; and thirdly, the custom or usage, constantly adapting itself to the growth of society, which may be observed in their intercourse. Each of these factors acts and reacts upon the others with which it is intimately connected.²

In other words, the fluid nature of the relationship was conceded even at the beginning of the twentieth century. By this time colonial officials had been trying for nearly half a century to work out a coherent conceptual framework within which the more than 500 princely states, covering about 40 per cent of the area of the subcontinent, could be placed and understood. The colonial state exhibited two contradictory tendencies in its approach to the princely states. On the one hand, it tried to codify and standardize the rules governing the relationship and on the other, it continuously adjusted its policies by modifying its conception of 'indirect' rule. Barbara Ramusack's comprehensive study of princely states in colonial India underlines the constantly shifting strategies of British imperialism vis-à-vis the princes in response to changing situations.³

As part of the long-term objective of depriving the princely rulers any room for manoeuvre, a large amount of easily accessible published material was placed at the disposal of colonial officials to facilitate their dealings with the states. This included gazetteers; treatises such as Lee-Warner's volume on the 'native' states (obviously compulsory reading for officials of the political service assigned to princely states); and C.U. Aitchison's *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, first published in 1862 and constantly updated until the end of the century.⁴ The act of placing these texts in the public domain itself significantly reduced the element of fluidity in the relationship between the British and the princely states, rendering as hegemonic the colonial discourse on 'paramountcy'. Paramountcy denoted

British superiority in the relationship with princely states. The notion of paramountcy was designed to deny agency to these states. All action emanated from the crown, or its representatives, so that even the limited autonomy enjoyed by princely states was seen to be granted to them from outside. Placing a territory under indirect rule was an option exercised by the paramount power as its special prerogative. It was a choice made by the paramount power without any reference to the concerned state.

Such an understanding of indirect rule, which informs much of the earlier historical writing on princely states, reflects, as Hira Singh has observed, 'the tendency in historical analysis to privilege the metropolis'.⁵ According to him, 'The problematic assumption is that the agency of doing, or not doing, anything in India ... rested exclusively with European political economy'. Such a perspective can only give us a 'one-sided view of the colonial encounter in which the Indian subjects are represented as mere objects of manipulation by the colonial-capitalist forces...'.⁶ In his forceful critique of the concept of indirect rule, Singh notes that the term suggests a one-way process in which the princely states (their rulers and subjects) played no role whatsoever. Any meaningful analysis of the place of princely states in the British Indian empire has to take into account both resistance and collaboration by indigenous ruling elites of these states, which, in turn, were determined by the balance of class forces within the states. The states were, after all, also sites of contestation between the people and the indigenous elite. Some of the writings on princely states published in the last decade have explored the histories of these states in terms of their specific socio-economic structures, culture, and the internal dynamics of their political histories.⁷

This study of princely Gwalior looks at the state from within. It views its history in the first half of the nineteenth century from the perspective of class contradictions in the state and also at the contradictions between British imperialism and various sections of Gwalior society. Gwalior was no theatre state, if at all one could speak of a theatre state in Nicholas Dirks' sense of 'little kingdoms' in colonial India as concerned entirely with empty rituals of royalty.⁸ It had a complex relationship with colonial

power that involved conflict and collaboration, the struggles of the people, and constant improvisation in the political and economic spheres.



Gwalior, the dominion of the Sindia dynasty, was the leading Maratha-ruled principality in colonial north India.⁹ In 1818, following the third and final Anglo-Maratha war (1817–18), the Sindia state accepted the supremacy of the East India Company. This implied that it retained a measure of internal autonomy while being subject to the company's overall supervision. Yet down to the late 1840s the company's control over the state remained ill-defined and superficial, largely due to the strong resistance that it encountered in Sindia territories.

By the time the Anglo-Maratha wars came to an end, Sindia territories were mainly confined to two regions, south of the Chambal River: Malwa (mainly in the present Madhya Pradesh districts of Mandsaur, Nimach, Ujjain, Shajapur and Vidisha); and the Gwalior region (in the Madhya Pradesh districts of Gwalior, Morena, Bhind, Shivpuri, Guna and Datia). There were also some isolated possessions along, and just south of, the Narmada. Finally, there was a small tract in the Panch Mahals district of Gujarat (which included the formidable Pavagarh Fort). Malwa was the region where the Sindias had initially established their authority during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and it remained the base of their political and economic power till the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Malwa plateau, located at the junction of northern, central and western India, constitutes the western portion of Madhya Pradesh with a few patches spilling over into neighbouring Rajasthan. Numerous rulers, ranging from the powerful Sindias to the petty-chieftains of Amjhera and Sailana, controlled different parts of the plateau at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Sindias possessed the largest chunk of territory, although, as we have noted, some of their territories were situated adjacent to but outside Malwa. Gwalior itself lies on the northern edge of Malwa. Whereas in the colonial geographical perception of India,

Malwa was regarded as part of central India, historically and culturally it would be more accurate to view it as part of the extensive zone of settled agrarian societies of northern India (notwithstanding the nomenclature of the state of Madhya, i.e. 'central', Pradesh in which most of Malwa is located). The Vindhya Hills constitute the southern boundary of this zone.¹⁰

Colonial consolidation in Malwa was a protracted affair and was completed only in the aftermath of 1857–8. For nearly four decades after 1818 there was stiff resistance to colonial intervention in the region. The Sindia state still had considerable real power till the 1840s. It also retained some of its military strength till as late as 1844. The indigenous states of Malwa had sufficient reserves of political, economic and military power that prevented their rulers from becoming mere puppets under British rule. Moreover, western Madhya Pradesh had a formidable tradition of popular resistance to colonial rule that, one would like to suggest, played a significant role in preparing the ground for the Great Revolt of 1857. This tradition earnestly sought to reverse the outcome of 1818. Some of the episodes that belong to this tradition reveal enough to suggest that such resistance was one of the factors that contributed towards prolonging the struggle for hegemony between indigenous groups in Malwa and the company far beyond 1818.

Unfortunately early nineteenth-century Malwa is largely a neglected area of historical research. The updated version of *The New Cambridge History of India* is an example of this neglect. In his otherwise comprehensive account of Maratha history Stewart Gordon, the author of the volume on the Marathas, has dismissed the period from the end of the 1790s to 1818 in a brief epilogue of just over two pages.¹¹ This is somewhat surprising in view of Gordon's own pioneering work on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Malwa.¹²

Malwa has had a well-defined regional identity at least since the medieval period. Annexed by Akbar in 1561, it had become a part of the Mughal empire in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Under the Mughals it was organized as a single administrative unit. The administrative boundaries of

the Mughal *suba* of Malwa coincided with the geographical boundaries of the plateau.¹³

Political fragmentation was the dominant feature of eighteenth-century Malwa. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Mughals had lost their monopoly of power in the *suba*. An intense struggle occurred during the long Malwa twilight between the Mughal decline and colonial ascendancy. The Marathas were the key players in this struggle. Other participants were Rajput and Pathan lineages and, briefly, towards the close of the century, the Pindaris.

Maratha spheres of influence in Malwa date back to the 1720s. Peshwa Baji Rao personally led two expeditions into the *suba* between 1722 and 1724. For subsequent incursions, Baji Rao relied on the abilities of Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Sindia and Udaji Pawar. The Maratha conquest of the plateau was complete by 1738. Under the Marathas, Malwa was divided between the Sindias with their capital at Ujjain (and later at Gwalior); the Holkars, with their capital at Indore; and the Pawars, with one branch ruling at Dhar, and the other from Dewas. Eastern Malwa was directly administered from Pune.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the centre of gravity of Maratha polity had shifted from western Maharashtra to Malwa. Malhar Rao Holkar and Mahadji Sindia were the two most outstanding Maratha sardars in eighteenth-century Malwa politics. Malhar Rao (d.1766) dominates the first half of the century, Mahadji Sindia (d.1794) the latter half; between them they laid the foundations of Maratha hegemony in the area. By the last quarter of the century, the Sindias had emerged as the leading Maratha ruling house in north India. On the other hand, the Pune court had almost no significant political role to play by the turn of the century, and ceased to exist after 1818.¹⁴

The territories of the Maratha chiefs were scattered and spread over the entire plateau. The manner in which the Pune court had initially assigned territories or spheres of influence to the Maratha warlords prevented these chiefs from controlling contiguous areas. Consequently, the Sindia state did not have a continuous border. Politically and militarily, given the sheer size

of its territories, it was in a position to dominate the entire region. Yet, the lack of territorial cohesiveness, along with the fact that the Marathas were newcomers to the region, necessitated that the ruling classes of the Maratha-ruled states be widely inclusive rather than narrowly exclusive. While the leading revenue farmers of these states were mostly Maharashtrian brahmins, the exploitative machinery had to rely on the support of locally entrenched Rajput lineages to extract the agrarian surplus.

In several parts of Malwa, Maratha expansion had taken place at the expense of Rajput chiefs. Nevertheless, Rajput chieftains survived, though with diminished authority. While their power received a severe setback, reducing them to a secondary position, they continued to exercise considerable control over land and political structures. Rajput lineages formed an integral part of the ruling class of Malwa in the eighteenth century. Indeed, several Rajput states survived into the nineteenth century and later: Kota, Ratlam, Sitamau, Rajgarh, Narsinghgarh and Jhabua. The territories of the Rajput states in eighteenth-century Malwa were relatively more compact than those of the Maratha states, being the result of a much longer historical process. In Maratha-ruled principalities, as for instance the Sindia state, they remained crucial as intermediaries and holders of superior rights over land.

Mahadji Sindia (r.1761–94) may be regarded as the real architect of the Sindia kingdom. It was under him that north India came under Maratha domination, extending by the late 1780s to Delhi. The Mughal emperor was to remain under Sindia ‘protection’ until 1803. Mahadji was succeeded by his grandnephew Daulat Rao Sindia (r.1794–1827) who had been adopted as heir to the Sindia throne. A singular feature of Sindia kingship in the early nineteenth century was that several successive rulers did not have any male offspring. In the absence of direct male descendants, successors to the *gaddi* could only be found by resorting to adoptions. While Daulat Rao himself was closely related to Mahadji, his two immediate successors, Jankoji (1827–43) and Jiyaji (1843–86), were distant relatives of the respective rulers whom they were chosen to succeed. Moreover, both Jankoji and Jiyaji belonged to collateral branches that had never had any

access to political power. Given this situation, decisions about the Sindia monarchy in the early nineteenth century had to be based and taken on a fairly wide consensus. In order to be stable it had to have the support of military chiefs, senior Maratha sardars or clan chiefs, the army, and powerful bankers. The prolonged minority of Jankoji as well as of Jiyaji, and the long spell of rule by regents or councils of regency made the support of these sections indispensable, thereby enabling them to have a considerable share of political power.

There are three clearly defined phases in the political history of the Sindia state c.1800–50. In the first phase Daulat Rao was engaged in consolidating the kingdom he had inherited from his predecessor Mahadji Sindia, and eventually devising means to resist the company's onslaught. Daulat Rao was in his early twenties when the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1802–5) took place.¹⁵ This was a time of great crisis for the Sindia as well as other Maratha states. He managed well enough: in the twelve years that intervened between the Second and Third Anglo-Maratha Wars, the Sindia state (which was now confined to the south of the Chambal) acquired a high degree of stability as well as some new territories.

Subsequently, between 1818 and 1827, Daulat Rao was primarily engaged in salvaging the structure of the state and much of its prestige from the reversals of 1818. The Sindias were successful in still retaining almost all territories south of the Chambal River; a large part of the army remained intact; revenue collection was made more efficient by reducing the power of the intermediaries; and colonial officials were prevented, more or less successfully, from meddling in the internal administration of the state.¹⁶

The first phase lasted till Daulat Rao's death in 1827 following which one of his wives, Baiza Bai, became the regent of the state. It was during the regency of Baiza Bai, 1827–33, that the hitherto somewhat subdued anti-British sentiment at the durbar became increasingly conspicuous. The third phase extends from 1833, when Baiza Bai was deposed in a coup, to 1843 when the company had to launch a full-scale military operation to subdue the Sindia army. During this phase the company was able to manipulate the factions at the durbar to its advantage, thereby acquiring greater

influence over the state. Until 1833 the company had found the Sindia state to be arrogant and unapproachable. By the late 1830s a section of the durbar officials, as well as many members of the royal family, had aligned themselves closely with the British. There was, however, still a powerful section of the Sindia elite that resented the company's interference. The conflict that this situation gave rise to culminated in a violent upheaval which was suppressed by the company through, as we shall see, a major military campaign in 1843.



Under the great Mahadji, the Sindia state had initiated a major overhaul of its military apparatus in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The possibility of an all-out war with the British for dominance over the subcontinent imparted an urgency to such an undertaking. This might perhaps have been the culmination of a longer process going back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, or even earlier.¹⁷ New methods of training and fighting, and novel mechanisms to finance the army, were incorporated in a big way under Mahadji. In this he was ably assisted by the French mercenary Benoit de Boigne. De Boigne—a major recent revisionist appraisal of his contribution notwithstanding—was one of the pillars of the new Sindia army.¹⁸ He joined in 1784 and resigned in 1795, leaving behind a formidable fighting force. De Boigne's major achievement was the integration of 'defence management and military budgeting' of the Sindia state: 'In promoting de Boigne, Mahadji Sindia backed a professional military management specialist'.¹⁹ The military reorganization carried out by Mahadji, with inputs from de Boigne, was dependent upon the ability of the Sindia state to raise financial resources on a regular basis. The success of several warrior chieftains in late eighteenth century north India in establishing relatively stable dynastic states may be attributed largely to their capacity to generate adequate revenue for regular payment of troops, maintaining centralized control over their respective armies, and ensuring cash flows on a large scale. Apart from the Sindias and the Holkars, the

diwan of the Kota state Jhala Zalim Singh (d.1823)—de facto ruler of Kota for nearly four decades—was among the more competent warrior chieftains operating on the margins of the Gangetic heartland in the late pre-colonial period. Gwalior and Kota were perhaps the two most dynamic states in this era of transition and could have been major hurdles to colonial expansion in the region. Of the two, Gwalior was by far more powerful and the company eventually preferred a negotiated settlement with it rather than attempt an outright military conquest so soon after the final and bloody struggle against Tipu Sultan (1799).

The exertions of the Sindias, the Holkars, and Zalim Singh collectively transformed the political economy of northern Malwa by the turn of the nineteenth century. Although there is a paucity of published research on the history of this transformation, Norbert Peabody's recent study of late pre-colonial Kota has illumined the process of change in northern-Malwa/southern-Rajasthan leading to the emergence of a potentially new social formation. At this juncture one would like to suggest that this process created conditions for introducing capitalist relations of production before being short-circuited by colonial intervention. Peabody's assessment of the historical situation points towards such possibilities:

Despite the historically poor reputation that the Marathas have endured almost everywhere in India (outside of Maharashtra, that is), recent historiography concerning the regions immediately south of Rajasthan has indicated that the 'deleterious' effect of the Marathas was not felt universally across space and time. Although the Marathas initially may have made their presence known in this region through hit-and-run plundering that greatly disrupted agricultural production, ... [they] later settled down to less violent modes of revenue extraction that increased tax receipts by fostering agricultural production, particularly as the region became better integrated into the Maratha sphere of influence.²⁰

The three factors mentioned by Peabody to account for the success of Zalim Singh's initiatives to promote military fiscalism, namely, (a) a strategic alliance with the Marathas, (b) settlement and development of the state's 'inner frontiers', and (c) growth of the opium trade, hold true for the Sindia and Holkar states as well, except that in their case the strategic alliance was, as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial arrangement, with Kota.²¹ It is significant that Zalim Singh also attempted to increase

agricultural production in several ways, mainly by bringing abandoned villages, wastelands and forest tracts under cultivation.²² Sindia and Holkar were thus tempted to rent out some of their holdings in the more inhospitable parts of northern Malwa to Zalim Singh who managed to collect revenue from these areas on a regular basis.

The late eighteenth century states of Malwa had evolved into an alliance of warrior chiefs, merchants/bankers, and dominant landed groups. This alliance sustained the cash flows required for a centralized military mobilization. The systematization and fine-tuning of revenue farming, collection of revenue based on the *ijara* or revenue farm, necessitated the close cooperation of the three classes, especially as the agrarian surplus had to be remitted in cash for paying salaries to infantry troops maintained centrally by the state. Revenues were assigned to *ijaradars* against fixed amounts to be paid in cash to the state. The *ijaradars* on their part looked to the banking houses to extend credit to them so that they could make necessary advances to the state or meet deadlines for payment. Bankers and merchants could, of course, frequently be *ijaradars* themselves, just as *ijaradars* could often be associated with the army in a variety of ways.

Banking and moneylending under Maratha rule was intimately connected with the state and its revenue apparatus, 'facilitating the translation of agrarian production into its monetized form and its remittance'.²³ Association with the state rendered stability to credit facilities extended by bankers, which in turn strengthened their financial position. The leading bankers were not dependent on private deposits for their financial dealings. They acted, as Amiya Bagchi points out, 'practically as custodians of treasuries of whole states'. Further, 'a very large part of the government's income that took a monetary form passed through their hands (as tribute, rent or interest on loans)'.²⁴ The Sindia state had no general treasury in which money could be deposited for disbursements by the government (though it did have a reserve treasury, called the *Ganga Jali*): 'All the cash is in the hands of the Soucars or Bankers of the Bazars, on whom the Government obtains a credit for certain sums by negotiating loans. These loans are negotiated by granting as securities orders on the Revenues of

different Districts, Bills on Tributaries, etc.’²⁵ This aspect of their financial dealings gave to the bankers the confidence to undertake operations on a large and extensive scale. In the process, instruments of credit involving large sums of money were used extensively on a subcontinental scale.

The use of *hundis* or inland bills of exchange that could be encashed even at distant places across the country, and the network of remittances which these implied, was already a part of the economy of Mughal India by the mid-seventeenth century. During the eighteenth century, bankers within the Maratha territories and outside regularly dealt in *hundis* as an integral part of their transactions. In fact, *hundis* should be regarded as the staple transaction of Indian bankers with transregional connections.²⁶ While posted in Malwa, John Malcolm was able to observe the transactions of the bankers at first hand:

There is at present, and has always been, in Central India, a great traffic in bills of exchange. An amount from two to three lacs mostly is drawn from Mhow and Indore, in bills on the treasuries of the Western provinces of Hindustan; and there can be no doubt that nearly double that sum may be negotiated at a favorable rate of exchange at the cities of Oojein and Indore alone.²⁷

Throughout Malwa, especially in the Sindia territories, indigenous financial and commercial networks were quite robust until the end of the 1830s. Integrated as these were with the state apparatus, they were protected against excessive colonial manipulation. Interestingly, a prominent feature of the world of high finance was the direct involvement of kings and chiefs in moneylending and banking operations. Zalim Singh, for instance, was reported to be a banker whose ‘terms of interest are as high as those of the most sordid money-brokers’.²⁸ Powerful merchants and bankers were an indispensable part of the Sindia durbar and their entrepreneurial activities are conceivable only in that setting. Political manoeuvres at the court were inseparable from financial-commercial deals of entrepreneurs linked to the durbar. The access that these entrepreneurs had to political power generally made them supporters of the status quo. This phenomenon was all the more so in an era of colonial penetration when upsetting the balance of political power in the kingdom would have been sheer folly: the position

of the entrepreneurs would have been seriously jeopardized since they could not have taken on the East India Company on their own. Further, their connection with land ensured that they remained an essentially conservative force. They often had the support of sections of the army, which in turn constantly required the financial resources of the *mahajans* and *sahukars*. At the same time their presence at the durbar provided a cushion for indigenous business groups and gave to the merchant class a sense of confidence.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the most influential faction of business magnates at the durbar was headed by Gokul Parakh, Sindia's chief minister and 'at the head of the mercantile body in Malwa'.²⁹ Most of the principal banking firms of Gwalior were associated with Parakh as partners.³⁰ Parakh's ascendancy dated from the beginning of the second decade of the nineteenth century. His appointment as Daulat Rao's prime minister was attributed to 'his command of money'.³¹ In 1811 the company's resident reported that 'every department of the state is clogged with arrears, particularly, that important one, the army'. Hence, 'to answer these demands, as well as to add to the hoards of his private treasury, Sindia frequently adopts the ruinous measure of anticipating his revenues, and Gokul Parakh by his advances has lately afforded considerable relief to the public exigencies'.³²

Parakh was seen by many as an upstart who had thrust himself on the scene mainly on the strength of his financial resources. His rise caused considerable resentment among older Maratha officials at the durbar. In the disputes that followed, Daulat Rao usually tended to side with Parakh who also enjoyed the support of Baiza Bai. Palace intrigues resulted in Parakh's removal in 1818, but he was soon requested to resume office primarily because his vast financial resources made him indispensable.³³ Parakh's departure had landed the Sindia state in deep financial trouble, to overcome which it became necessary to persuade the banker to return at the earliest, which he did in August 1819.³⁴ He continued to occupy a key position in Sindia affairs as well as in the commercial world of Malwa until his death in 1827. Parakh's main partner was the prominent banker and revenue

farmer Mani Ram. The two names were synonymous in business circles throughout Malwa. Mani Ram was the foremost banker of Gwalior during the period of Baiza Bai's regency.³⁵ The central role of Gokul Parakh and Mani Ram in the Sindia state is apparent from the fact that both Daulat Rao and Baiza Bai had investments in their banking concerns.³⁶ Personally for Baiza Bai, her proximity to the leading bankers of the state bore additional meaning. This pertained to her career as a banker. By the second decade of the century Baiza herself was involved in large scale banking transactions. The massive profits that she earned from moneylending, discounting bills of exchange, speculation and various financial and banking activities, made her fabulously wealthy. These profits were in addition to the earnings from extending patronage to, or perhaps direct involvement in, the opium trade, in which Baiza Bai would have shared along with other sections of the Sindia ruling elite.

It may be argued that for nearly four crucial decades down to the 1840s the huge opium produce of the Sindia territories and the business ventures linked to its export to China via the west coast of India were of critical importance to the political economy of the state. In the absence of the opium (export) enterprise Gwalior could just not have afforded the luxury of a large 'modernized' army. I shall return to this argument in a later chapter.

NOTES

1. Cf. Bernard Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', in E.J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1992 (first published 1983), pp. 165–210. Cohn's seminal essay on the 1877 durbar has a detailed discussion on the various ceremonial devices used by colonial officials to define the position of princely rulers vis-à-vis the crown.
2. William Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, rpt, New Delhi, 1979 (first published 1910).
3. Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, Vol. III, Pt. 6 of *The New Cambridge History of India*, , South Asian edn, 2005, especially Chapter IV.
4. Cf. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, pp. 88–98.
5. Hira Singh, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography and the Princely States: Relations of Power and Rituals of Legitimation', in Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati, eds., *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, London, 2007, p. 18.
6. Singh, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography', p. 19.

7. Among the more interesting works one could mention Margrit Pernau, *The Passing of Patrimonialism: Politics and Political Culture in Hyderabad, 1911–1948*, New Delhi, 2000; Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2003; Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, Ranikhet, 2007 (first published 2004); and the collection of essays in Ernst and Pati, *India's Princely States*.
8. Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Indian edn, Bombay, 1989, pp. 384–97.
9. Sindia (also spelt Scindia, or Sindhia) is the anglicized version of Shinde (Śinde). In the colonial period, especially from the early nineteenth century onwards, the 'Sindia state' was usually referred to as 'Gwalior state' or just 'Gwalior', Gwalior being the capital of the state. However, Gwalior became the seat of the Sindia rulers only in the 1810s.
10. Malwa is an elevated plain lying at the heart of the Indian peninsula, situated in the western portion of the present-day state of Madhya Pradesh. The elevation of the plateau, which is roughly 240 km by 200 km in extent, ranges between 400–600 mts. above sea level. Towards the south, Malwa is bound by the Vindhya Hills, after crossing which one enters the Narmada Valley. In the east, Malwa extends to Vidisha and Bhopal. To the northwest of Malwa, once the Aravallis have been crossed, lies the Thar Desert. In the west, Malwa is enclosed by Gujarat.
11. Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas, 1600–1818: The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. II, Pt. 4, Indian edn, Delhi, 1993, pp. 175–7.
12. See the articles reproduced in Stewart Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders, and State Formation in Eighteenth-Century India*, Delhi, 1994.
13. Cf. Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 33–5.
14. For more details on the rise and expansion of the Maratha empire, see Gordon, *The Marathas*.
15. I have preferred the conventional chronology and sequence of the Anglo–Maratha wars, which however, is not definitive. See Randolph G.S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India: The Struggle for Control of the South Asian Military Economy*, South Asian edn, New Delhi, 2005, p.1, n.1.
16. A lengthy note prepared by John Malcolm on the hostile attitude of Sindia officials in the context of a commercial dispute in which Malcolm had tried to intervene, brings out sharply the difficulties faced by the company in exercising effective control over the day-to-day affairs of the state in the early nineteenth century. John Malcolm, 3 March 1821, SR, 2/23 April 1821.
17. Cf. Cooper, *Anglo-Maratha Campaigns*, pp. 44ff.
18. Ibid., pp. 46–7, 60.
19. Ibid., p. 48.
20. Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, South Asian edn, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 128–9.
21. Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, p. 124.
22. Ibid., p. 131.
23. Frank Perlin, 'Money-use in Late Pre-Colonial India and the International Trade

- in Currency Media', in J.F. Richards, ed., *The Imperial Monetary System of Mughal India*, Delhi, 1987, p. 281.
24. A.K. Bagchi, *The Evolution of the State Bank of India: The Roots, 1806-1876*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1987, pp. 31-2.
 25. Gwalior acting resident, 2 July 1818, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 121.
 26. G.T. Kulkarni, 'Banking in the Eighteenth Century: A Case Study of a Poona Banker', *Artha Vijnana*, Vol. XV, No. 15 (1973), pp. 180-200.
 27. John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India, including Malwa and Adjoining Provinces*, 2 Vols., London, 1823, Vol. II, p. 88.
 28. Ibid., p. 62.
 29. James Taylor, deputy opium agent, 13 February 1822, SR, 30/10 April 1822; W. Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer*, London, 1828, Vol. II, p. 344.
 30. Jadunath Sarkar, ed., *Poona Residency Correspondence*, Vol. XIV, Bombay, 1951, p. 297, letter no. 251, dated 1 February 1816.
 31. *PRC*, Vol. XIV, p. 106, letter no. 89, dated 30 December 1811.
 32. Ibid.
 33. *PRC*, Vol. XIV, pp. 105-6, letter no. 89; p. 70, letter no. 51; pp. 170-1, letter no. 149; pp. 297-8, letter no. 251; p. 409, letter no. 344. On the Sindia old-guard see Raghubir Singh, ed., *Poona Residency Correspondence*, Vol. X, Bombay, 1951, pp. 205-18, letter no. 95 (enclosure).
 34. 10 September 1819, NAI, FDP, 34/9 October 1819.
 35. Mani Ram originally belonged to Jaipur. He rose from being a haberdasher in the Gwalior cantonment bazaar to one of the richest bankers in the state: 'all others look up to him, and will not advance a rupee to government, without his advice'. John Clunes, *Itinerary and Directory for Western India*, Calcutta, 1826, Appendix (1828), p. 61.
 36. Gwalior resident, 7 February 1834, NAI, FDP, 13/3 April 1834.



The Pindari Interlude

GENERAL DE BOIGNE's resignation in 1795 had created a vacuum, depriving the Sindia army of a military leader who could lend cohesion to the officer cadre. Daulat Rao was unable to find an appropriate replacement for him. This had disastrous consequences in 1803. Had his health not deteriorated 'beyond recovery', de Boigne might have remained in service for many more years.¹ It was with great reluctance that he departed for Europe, on medical advice, lamenting 'it being now 27 years [since] I left for the last time my native place, I have not a relative, a person of my acquaintance, [whereas] in this country and at my station I enjoy a reputation, a credit, an influence which I will nor would expect in Europe with the advantage of being able to do good to a number of people'.² As a mercenary, the general owed personal loyalty to his chief, and towards the soldiers of his contingents, rather than to the Sindia state as a political entity. Following is the advice he rendered to his protégé Robert Sutherland in a private letter:³

Having recommended you my interests I strongly recommend you those of the Prince [Daulat Rao]. Do your utmost for his glory, the good of his services, and to maintain the reputation of the troops under your command, to accomplish it, it requires activity and exactitude in every part of the service, if neglected subordination is lost, and there is an end to everything.

De Boigne would have preferred Sutherland as his successor; however Daulat Rao settled for the more senior General Perron.⁴ The defection

in 1803 of General Perron who had succeeded de Boigne, and Sindia's losses in the Second Anglo-Maratha War, represented a setback for the endeavour to develop the Sindia army into a force that could take on the East India Company.⁵ Nevertheless, in the period following the Second Anglo-Maratha War, by which time the military strength of the Sindia state had been somewhat reduced, the regular army was still impressive in its size and combat readiness. It comprised 26,406 well-trained infantry troops and 13,152 cavalry. There were, in addition, 396 guns that could be used to devastating effect. The break-up of the army was as follows:⁶

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Infantry</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>	<i>Guns</i>
Jean Baptiste's force	8,030	1,330	144
Maj. Jacob's brigade	4,876	155	42
Ambajee Punt's brigade	2,472	100	24
Corps under Jaswant Rao Bhau	2,080	2,163	12
Daun Singh's brigade	2,605	708	32
Force at Ajmer	1,809	256	36
Bapoo Sindia's force	2,305	1,362	21
Corps under Gunga Singh, Meherban Singh and Mohun Singh	1,054	40	7
Park with the Maharaja	1,175	78	
In camp at Gwalior or in the neighbour- hood, including the detachments with Baptiste at Awar and Mandsaur		7,038	

Senior military officials of the company had seriously underestimated the strength of the Maratha armies at the time of the Second Anglo-Maratha War. According to Randolph Cooper, Arthur Wellesley too, 'like many others, believed the traditional Maratha army to have been composed solely of Pindari horse. Disciplined infantry battalions he thought to be a recent and unsuccessful experiment'.⁷ That this assessment was a mistaken one was realized at the battle of Assaye. As Cooper points out,

Maratha artillery was more advanced than British on several counts. Wellesley himself conceded there was no comparison in the quality of design and manufacture and ... it featured greater technical innovation and a more advanced method of application. There was also an integrated deployment, which grouped weapons in a manner not found among the British, whose artillery was dominated by six and twelve pounders, with heavier

eighteen and twenty-four pounders available as required for siege duty. The Maratha artillery troops, in contrast, carried a much greater variety of guns into the field, often up to thirty-six pounders. Despite the heavy weight, the effort was justified on more than one occasion when they were used for their long range or sheer kinetic energy.⁸

This is borne out by the observations of a British officer who was present at the crucial battle of Assaye: 'Nothing could surpass the skill or bravery displayed by their golumdauze [*golandaṣ*, gunner], as our loss fully testified. When taken, their guns were all found laid a few degrees below the point blank, just what they ought to be for the discharge of grape or canister at a short distance'.⁹

At present, this is not where one can discuss the reasons that were responsible for Sindia's reverses during the Second Anglo-Maratha War. However, a lack of military resources was certainly not one of them:

In giving an assessment of the total force of Daulat Rao Sindia in the north, it is necessary to recall that he had the capacity, which he did not use well, to reinforce the north from the Deccan. Of the formed infantry brigades all under the overall command of Perron, some 22 battalions, in all about 17,000 men, in the area Aligarh-Delhi-Agra. There would have been a considerable force of both regular and irregular cavalry in addition, certainly numbering at least 20,000.¹⁰

The year 1803 was not the end of the road for Sindia's famed infantry brigades and artillery units. They survived, in fairly good shape, for another 40 years. This was not any longer an army of conquest (though territories continued to be annexed in the area lying between the Chambal and Narmada down to 1818), but its presence acted as a check upon arbitrary colonial intrusion. In 1844, when the army was finally disbanded, the infantry had 30,670 men while the strength of the regular cavalry (by now mainly for ceremonial purposes) was 10,056. The artillery, in excellent condition as we shall see later, had 200 guns and 2,101 men attached to it.¹¹ The presence of mercenaries, some of European descent, provided an element of continuity in the post-1803 period. The three most prominent commanders of infantry regiments in this period were Jean Baptiste Filose of Neapolitan descent, Col. Jose Alexander of Portuguese descent and the Armenian Col. Jacob Petrus.

Jean Baptiste Filose had a very long career, spanning nearly half a

century, as an officer in the Sindia army.¹² His father, Michael Filose, a mercenary from Naples, had enlisted with Mahadji Sindia in the late 1780s.¹³ He served under de Boigne, soon getting command of a battalion, and eventually a corps comprising eleven battalions, many of which he had helped to raise and train. In 1797 he was forced to resign his position due to the role he is supposed to have played in the confinement of Nana Farnavis, the leading Maratha political figure at Pune. Michael Filose left for Europe and perhaps died on the way. His eleven battalions were then divided and placed under the command of his two sons, Fidele and Jean Baptiste. In 1801 Fidele committed suicide upon being accused of treachery and most of his battalions came under the command of Jean Baptiste.¹⁴ After 1803 Jean Baptiste was given command over the most efficient infantry contingents, and was assigned a large *jaidad* for their upkeep.¹⁵ This enabled him to pay his troops regularly. In the period between the two Anglo-Maratha wars Jean Baptiste's army made several additions to Sindia territories, many of which were confirmed, and therefore retained by Gwalior, when the territories of the state were frozen in 1818.

Jean Baptiste's military career was at its peak in 1816–17. The minting of several Sindia coins bearing the mark of a cannon indicates the prestige he enjoyed. These were struck at places with which he was associated, commemorating some of his victories (Chanderi, Isagarh, Sheopur).¹⁶ But there was also a strong faction opposed to him at Gwalior.¹⁷ The intrigues of this faction and the suspicions of Daulat Rao about Baptiste's conduct during the 1817–18 war brought about his downfall. Daulat Rao was apprehensive that the colonel might switch sides, as many European mercenaries had done in 1803. He therefore imprisoned Jean Baptiste, keeping him in confinement till 1825 when he was released through the intercession of the prime minister Gokul Parakh.¹⁸ It is difficult to account for the harsh punishment meted out by the maharaja, unless the allegation that Baptiste had been secretly negotiating with the British had some substance.¹⁹ In view of his unswerving loyalty to Gwalior in the subsequent years, and his earlier career, this is hard to believe. In any case something seems to have gone seriously awry in the relationship between the two,

and Jean Baptiste was not restored to his command while Daulat Rao was alive.²⁰ It was not until the late 1820s that he once again got an opportunity to lead some of the infantry contingents.²¹

With Jean Baptiste completely marginalized for the time being, Col. Jacob and Jose Alexander (who was still a relatively junior officer) became increasingly influential as military commanders in the 1820s. Alexander was much younger than both Jean Baptiste and Jacob.²² Col. Jacob Petrus was the son of an Armenian merchant settled in India. He was born in Delhi and joined the Sindia army sometime in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.²³ Like Jean Baptiste he served in the Sindia army for several decades, living to the ripe old age of 95 (he passed away in 1850). His rise coincided with the large-scale defection of European mercenaries during the Second Anglo-Maratha War. Some of the infantry battalions that had earlier been under European officers were placed under Jacob. By the end of the first decade of the century he was second only to Jean Baptiste in terms of the number of troops he commanded. Col. Jacob's position was further strengthened in the years that Jean Baptiste was in disgrace. In fact his growing clout was one of the factors that made possible the reinstatement of Jean Baptiste who, it was expected, would act as a counterweight to Jacob. In 1833 Jacob had a *jaidad* which was estimated to yield Rs.12,67,000 per annum for the maintenance of his troops.²⁴ It was this *jaidad* that became the source of much trouble and conflict in the state in the early 1830s.²⁵ Shortly before the strength of the Gwalior army was drastically reduced in 1844, Col. Jacob had nearly 9000 men under him.²⁶ Jacob retired in 1844, and his *jaidad* was resumed.²⁷ Jean Baptiste retained his position till his death in 1846.²⁸ After his death his youngest grandson, Peter, was appointed to his post with the rank of major and the Filose family occupied an important position in the Sindia administration, as well as the social life of the capital, down to the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁹ Curiously, neither Filose nor Jacob rose beyond the rank of colonel. The rank of general ended with Perron.



After 1805 Daulat Rao Sindia attempted to maintain a strategic advantage by inducting a large number of irregular troops, mainly the Pindaris. This was a shrewd move, particularly as it did not involve any major financial commitment. The inter-war period, c.1805–17, was marked by large-scale Pindari military and political presence in Malwa. This is indeed one of the main features of the region during the first two decades of the nineteenth century and had far-reaching social consequences. It is necessary to examine the Pindari phenomenon in order to understand the nature of the Sindia army in the pre-1818 period.

Highly prejudiced servants of the East India Company are our main source of information about the Pindaris. This information is supplemented by references to the Pindaris in Maratha records. It was during the Second Anglo-Maratha War that colonial officials began taking notice of the Pindaris but lost interest in them soon after 1818. The views of Malcolm were the single-most important influence on the colonial perception of the Pindaris. Malcolm first began scrutinizing them when he was at the Sindia durbar during the first half of 1804.³⁰ Later, in his *Memoir of Central India*, written after the Third Anglo-Maratha War, Malcolm presented a detailed and connected narrative of the Pindaris.³¹ This was to remain, and still is, the standard account of the Pindaris. Most of what has been written about them can ultimately be traced, apart from Malcolm's *Memoir*, to contemporary reports prepared by James Tod (1811), Richard Jenkins (1812) and George Sydenham (1814), and the voluminous correspondence reproduced in *Papers Respecting the Pindarry and Mahratta Wars*.³²

The official colonial view of the Pindaris focuses exclusively on their plundering activities, completely missing out both on the disruption which colonial intervention caused, and the twin processes of social differentiation and state-formation that tribal people in parts of western and central India were undergoing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This view is echoed in more recent writings on the subject as well. Thus, B.K. Sinha in his full-length study, *The Pindaris*, naively observes that 'the Pindaris had no political aspirations and the main underlying principle of their organization was to strike terror into the hearts of the people so that they

might not offer any resistance or opposition and they might accomplish their sole purpose of plunder and return to their camps with rich booty'.³³

In colonial writings the Pindaris are invariably labelled 'free-booters', a synonym for pirates.³⁴ This indicates where the Pindaris were placed in colonial discourse. The 'freebooter' label ruled out the possibility of negotiating with them. The Marathas accorded a somewhat more respectable status to the Pindaris. They appear as an adjunct to the main army.³⁵ For the Marathas the Pindaris were a self-sustaining auxiliary force. Apart from constituting a low-cost cavalry the Pindaris had other uses. They effectively harassed and inflicted losses on the enemy with their hit-and-run tactics, plundered retreating troops, and served to generally demoralize local support bases of the opponent by striking terror through their swift and unpredictable raids. The real forte of the Pindaris was their familiarity with difficult terrain, especially hills and jungle, their speed, and their low level of subsistence. By the early nineteenth century 'Pindari' had become a generic expression in Malwa for bands of mercenaries who combined soldiering with rapid raiding expeditions.

The Pindaris made their appearance towards the end of the eighteenth century as a new factor in Malwa politics. Originally, they were one of the numerous people living on the fringe of settled society in Malwa. Their process of integration began when many of them found a place in the Maratha military organization. By the end of the eighteenth century they had become a regular part of Maratha campaigns north of the Narmada.³⁶

Some of the hypotheses about the origins of the Pindaris are in fact so vague as to render meaningless any discussion on this problem. In one attempt to unravel the mystery of their origins, the term 'Pindari' is linked to a variety of intoxicating drink to which the Pindaris are supposed to have been addicted;³⁷ in another attempt the name is linked to the word *pendha* or bundle of straw suggesting that Pindaris were originally foragers.³⁸

Of more relevance is the reference to the tribal core of the Pindaris in R.V. Russell's *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*. According to Russell, the Pindaris had descended from the Gonds and Bhils of central India.³⁹ There was certainly an older Pindari tribal stratum which had a

strong connection with the Narmada Valley and the Vindhya. The *Settlement Report* for Hoshangabad, a district in which there had been a number of Pindari possessions, observed that their ancestors 'were generally Gonds, Kurkus, Bhils, etc.'⁴⁰ Right till 1818 the leading Pindari chiefs retained holdings in the Narmada Valley and the Vindhyan forests, especially in the stretch between south-eastern Dewas and the Hoshangabad-Narsimhapur border.⁴¹

Parts of Hoshangabad (district) were closely identified with the Pindaris (Handia, Harda, Timurni, Makrai, etc.). Besides, some of the adjoining areas of Dewas—Nemawar, Satwas, Kannod, Kantaphor, Bagli—were Pindari bases. The two most important Pindari chiefs, Chitu and Karim Khan, had holdings in Narsimhapur (district) at Barha and Paloha. Chitu had lodged his family at a village close to Satwas.⁴² He had received Satwas as a grant from Daulat Rao Sindia, and had built a fort there. Four guns were reportedly placed at the fort. Satwas (district Dewas, Madhya Pradesh), lies south of the Vindhya and commands the road to Nemawar. Nemawar (district Dewas) is strategically located on the northern bank of the Narmada at a point where the river is fordable. Handia (district Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh) is situated on the opposite bank. Nemawar, which was part of Sindia's territories, had also been granted to Chitu who established a cantonment at the place.⁴³ South of the Narmada, Timurni, Makrai, Harda, Barha and Paloha were among the territories held by the Pindari chiefs. It is worth noting that in the Narmada Valley most of their possessions were concentrated in the tract between Handia and Narsimhapur, i.e. east of Nimar and west of Jabalpur.

Both Chitu and Karim Khan had accepted grants from Sindia in the rather remote and inhospitable Narsimhapur area. These appear to have had almost a symbolic significance. The two villages given to them (Barha to Chitu and Paloha to Karim Khan) could not have yielded a large revenue nor were they strategically important. They are situated close to each other in Gadarwara *tehsil* in the western portion of district Narsimhapur, not far from the southern bank of the Narmada. The Shakkar River, a tributary of the Narmada, runs along the west of Paloha. Barha lies south of Paloha.

Chitu had built a fort at Barha.⁴⁴ By itself the Narsimhapur area was of little consequence at this point of time. Until about the last quarter of the eighteenth century it was unsettled and sparsely populated. Narsimhapur town, originally known as village Gadariya Kheda ('settlement of shepherds'), began to develop only during the 1780s.⁴⁵

Chitu and Karim Khan did not have any particular personal attachment to the Narsimhapur area, since they themselves came from Mewat and Malwa respectively, but were keen to maintain a presence at this gateway to the Gond homeland.⁴⁶ This would have allowed them to procure fresh recruits for their raiding expeditions, most of which increasingly took place in northern Malwa. As a matter of fact the Pindari leaders retained outposts in the Narsimhapur-Hoshangabad-Dewas stretch of the Narmada Valley, partly to have some safe refuge in case of an emergency, but mainly to enlist followers from among tribal communities of the central Indian forest (Gonds, Bhils, etc.). The lifestyles of these communities had undergone a metamorphosis due to various historical processes. The resulting 'social disintegration' led to the formation of tribal bands 'in the hills and woodlands' which engaged in plunder to support themselves.⁴⁷ These groups had a crucial role to play in the Pindari scheme of things as suppliers of soldiers. Recruitment would have taken place during or immediately after the monsoon when the Pindaris congregated on the banks of the Narmada to recoup their resources. They normally desisted from undertaking any expeditions till the rains were over.⁴⁸

The Pindaris were not a closed, homogeneous group. Whatever little evidence we have on how the Pindaris interacted with each other indicates that members of Pindari bands did not share a primordial or permanent attachment to one another. The term 'pindari' does not suggest a membership composed of an entire ethnic or language group. Though several Pindari bands might have come together periodically, as for instance near the Narmada during the rainy season, there were no traditions that compelled them to gather regularly or permanently as a single unit. The major bands were in a constant state of flux as smaller groups departed, families veered off on their own for various periods and

captives married into the community. In the words of Sydenham 'they now form a heterogeneous mass containing followers of almost every caste of Hindoos, and every sect of Mahomedans.' Similarly, the commission which inquired into an alleged Pindari raid on Guntur and some other parts of Andhra recorded that the raiders 'were composed of all tribes, from the . . . Bramin and Rajepoot, to the Paria . . .'.⁴⁹

The Pindaris must be placed against the backdrop of a continuous historical process of social differentiation in the extensive central and western Indian tribal belt. This process was linked to state-formation, empire-building and the search for military recruits. The entire Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan/Gujarat border, and the Vindhya-Satpura region, still has a substantial tribal population. Throughout the medieval period the communities inhabiting this area were going through a phase of transition to class society. In the later medieval period the pace of this transition had been accelerated by Mughal expansion, the drive of the Dakhani sultanates, and Maratha empire-building. The inhabitants of the central Indian hills and forests did not lead a completely isolated existence. They were suppliers of forest produce (so that there was some exchange between them and settled agriculturists); strategically and commercially important routes passed through the areas inhabited by them; and they could provide human resources to patrol the hill and jungle terrain they knew so well. While discussing the evolving ethnicities of Bhils and Gonds, the two major tribal groups of the central Indian forest, Sumit Guha points out that the tribal-dominated lands of this region 'were no tranquil backwaters, isolated from the turbulent politics of the peninsula'. 'Nor indeed were they', he adds, 'inhabited by relic populations obstinately preserving their archaic lifeways. They were in fact deeply integrated into the political economy of medieval India.'⁵⁰

One important trend set in motion by changes taking place in this frontier region was the emergence of warriors in tribal societies. This was linked by Surajit Sinha to state-formation, the articulation of new identities, and Rajputization.⁵¹ The tribal belt would henceforth provide recruits for armies, while petty 'predatory chiefs' would add to the pool

of those whose services could be enlisted by contractors for recruits.⁵² Dirk Kolff's study of the phenomenon of the recruitment of troopers by middlemen in medieval India contains a useful discussion on Rajputization and the transition from a tribal to a warrior culture based on differentiation and specialization. Kolff refers to a broader development, which includes the Pathans, whereby the transition to a social formation marked by the presence of a professional warrior class led to dissolving former identities and taking over readymade new ones defined either as Rajput or Pathan. 'This may be a heretical thing to say', Kolff argues, 'but I suggest that, according to the ways of the north Indian military labour market, in the pre-Mughal period, "Afghan" as well as "Rajput" were soldiers' identities rather than ethnic or genealogical denotations. It was merely to register membership of the war-band they had decided to join that, until quite late on, Indian soldiers were known by such names.'⁵³

One would like to suggest that whatever the term 'Pindari' might have originally meant, by the second half of the eighteenth century it had come to denote an intermediate identity in Malwa and the middle Narmada. This was yet another option available to the new warriors for whom it defined an identity which could, given the right opportunity, become a sort of stepping stone to more reputed identities.

Kolff's work helps us comprehend events occurring on the periphery of peasant societies in central India in the later medieval period. There was a connection between military service, state-formation, and newly acquired identities (Rajput, Pathan, Pindari). It was an indication of a society in a state of flux that social groups were not 'closed'; identities were not yet inflexible. Mughal, Maratha and Rajput states absorbed the soldiers provided by the tribal belt. Pindari chiefs became, in effect, contractors or subcontractors looking after the interests of their respective groups and making no permanent commitments. Guha argues that 'Maratha incursions in north-western Khandesh could hardly have been possible without at least the acquiescence of the local Bhils. Their support was also enlisted by the Mughal commanders.'⁵⁴ Constant renegotiation was required for acquiring the support of this soldiery. Whenever possible or necessary they could go

in for small-time plunder or extorting money to ensure the safety of vital routes passing through their settlements.

In the years preceding the Third Anglo-Maratha War, Karim Khan and Chitu were the two most outstanding Pindari leaders. Of the two, Khan was politically the more important, having been on the verge of creating an independent state in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Tod remarked in 1811 that Karim Khan 'had attained a degree of established power, before unknown to these plundering unsettled Hordes'. He added that Karim Khan possessed 'a pretty extensive, compact fertile and well cultivated territory, containing several strongholds well garrisoned, and the appearance of a regular system of authority.'⁵⁵ Significantly, the moment Karim Khan attempted to graduate to the status of an independent ruler, Sindia cut him to size. Daulat Rao Sindia held Karim Khan captive from 1806 to 1811.

Khan's territories were mainly located in eastern Malwa, especially on the outskirts of the Bhopal state,⁵⁶ which was almost on the verge of extinction after 1805. Bhopal, which had risen to prominence in the first quarter of the eighteenth century under Dost Muhammad Khan, was the main Pathan stronghold in Malwa.⁵⁷ Initially, Bhopal and the adjacent eastern Malwa *parganas* became the main target of the Pindaris. Karim Khan had established his principal cantonment at Berasia near Bhopal.⁵⁸ Sindia and Holkar preferred to confine the Pindaris to this area, at some distance from the core of their territory in western Malwa. For example, the tribute due to Sindia and Holkar from the frontier Rajgarh and Narsingharh principalities in north-east Malwa was formally divided between Karim Khan and Chitu who were left to deal with this difficult area.⁵⁹ For a long time the eastern Malwa *parganas* had been administered directly from Pune, but with the collapse of the Peshwa's authority they had been encroached upon by Sindia, Holkar as well as by numerous other contenders.

After 1805 the Pindaris were looked upon as useful and relatively inexpensive military allies. There was a marked increase in the number of Pindaris employed as soldiers by the Maratha states of Malwa. Jenkins

estimated that their number had doubled between 1804 and 1809, from about 13,000 to roughly 25,000.⁶⁰ At the same time he differentiated between 'real' Pindaris of the pre-1805 period and the large number of new recruits, many of whom were simply discharged soldiers of Indian states which had been forced to scale down their military strength or disband their armies altogether after the Second Anglo-Maratha War.⁶¹ In 1811 Sindia entered into a specific agreement with Karim Khan 'that no other persons but such as were real Pindaris should be entertained in the *durrahs* [*dharas*, bands], and that other adventurers should be expelled'.⁶² Significantly, senior officials of the East India Company had been aware of the urgent need to provide alternative means of subsistence to former soldiers. Arthur Wellesley remarked in 1804, 'I think we run a great risk from the freebooter system Conceive a country in every village of which there are from twenty to thirty horsemen who have been dismissed from the service of the State and who have no means of living except by plunder'.⁶³

Many of the new additions might have been part-time soldiers and part-time agriculturists from Malwa villages. That at the turn of the century Pindaris were not necessarily outsiders and had strong local roots in the Malwa countryside is suggested by the ease with which they dispersed—dissolved is a more appropriate word—after an expedition, or when attacked. Their speed and their swift dispersal was crucial to their overall strategy: 'all that a pursuing Party can on most occasions expect, is to come up with the cattle and a few attendants on Foot But even then many of the men unload their Ponies, mount them and escape, while others conceal themselves in any villages, Hills, or Jungles that may be at hand.'⁶⁴ Malcolm reported that 'If pursued, they made marches of extraordinary length, . . . by roads almost impracticable for regular troops. If overtaken, they dispersed, and reassembled at an appointed rendezvous; if followed to the country, . . . they broke up into small parties. Their wealth, their booty, and their families were scattered over a wide region, in which they found protection amid the mountains, and in the fastnesses belonging to themselves and to those with whom they were either openly or secretly connected'.⁶⁵ It was noticed that after successful raiding expeditions, laden pack animals

of the Pindaris were frequently unloaded at villages lying on the route of their return journey. This implies that many of those who had accompanied an expedition went home to their respective abodes along the way as the Pindaris dispersed.⁶⁶

We have already noted that the Maratha armies in Malwa had customarily employed Pindaris. After 1805 Pindari participation in Maratha campaigns assumed a new significance. Yashwant Rao Holkar (r.1797–1811) and Daulat Rao Sindia forged a sweeping alliance with them that was manifested in the Pindaris acquiring a limited share in political power. This provided the Pindaris an opportunity to enlarge the scope of their activities. Apart from being assigned specific territories, the prominent Pindari leaders were for the first time honoured with titles that announced their new status, and served to acknowledge their political clout in post-1805 Malwa. Chitu was honoured with the pompous title of ‘Nawab Kamal Khan Mustaqim Jang’, Karim Khan had the title ‘Nawab Sarfaraz-ud-daula’ conferred on him by Sindia while Dost Muhammad, another prominent Pindari chief, was also given the title of nawab.⁶⁷ Chitu, Karim Khan and Dost Muhammad all had the privilege, usually reserved for royalty, of a *naubat* (kettledrum).⁶⁸ After all, the Malwa states had to find a basis for the loyalty of the Pindari chiefs so as to ensure that the troops mobilized by them did not remain mere mercenaries. Had it not been for the Third Anglo-Maratha War, these gestures might have become devices for incorporating some of the Pindari military leaders within the structures of the Malwa states. Chitu’s flag symbolically expressed loyalty for Sindia. He carried a saffron-coloured flag with a small white snake drawn in the centre. This snake was an insignia of the Sindias. The sticks carried by Chitu’s *harkaras* (messengers) were also ‘mounted by small snake’s Heads, made of silver’.⁶⁹

Given the very low social status of the Pindaris, they had so far been kept at a considerable distance.⁷⁰ Now for the first time, under Daulat Rao, Pindari leaders were deemed worthy of some social intercourse. To quote Malcolm, ‘Although they commanded large bodies of men they were never allowed to sit down in the presence of the prince; and when Jeswunt Row [Yashwant Rao Holkar] . . . met Dowlet Row Sindia [Daulat Rao

Sindia] he reproached that prince for the encouragement he had given the Pindarry chiefs, by his personal intercourse with them, and by the high titles and grants of land which he had bestowed on men unworthy of such distinction.⁷¹

Nevertheless, Daulat Rao was not willing to admit any Pindari claim to sharing political power in Malwa on a permanent basis. Hence his anxiety to keep Karim Khan under control without alienating him completely. The company's residents at the Sindia court remarked that Karim did not really suffer rigorous confinement.⁷² What is more, even in captivity Karim maintained close links with sections of Sindia's army, particularly with the powerful faction led by Jaswant Rao Bhau.⁷³ Jaswant Rao was to provide shelter to Karim Khan and Chitu in the closing phase of the Third Anglo-Maratha War. The nexus between Jaswant Rao Bhau and the Pindari leaders is illustrative of the extent to which the military leaders of the Malwa states were dependent upon the Pindari soldiers. Jean Baptiste frequently collaborated with Jaswant Rao for recruiting Pindaris. Jaswant Rao played a major role in cementing ties between the Pindaris and the Sindia army during the interwar period.

Jaswant Rao was a leading commander of the Sindia army during the first half of the nineteenth century. His father, Jiva Dada, had been one of Sindia's chief military officers in the late eighteenth century. Jaswant Rao held the *parganas* of Jawad, Jiran and Nimach (district Mandsaur/Nimach, Madhya Pradesh) on the Malwa-Mewar border till 1818. Sindia had taken these *parganas* from Udaipur. Jaswant Rao gradually consolidated his position in this frontier region and used it as a base for encroaching upon the territories of states in south-eastern Rajasthan, especially Mewar. The fortified town of Jawad was the capital of Jaswant Rao's fiefdom. He constantly needed military support to stabilize Sindia rule in the area.

The ubiquitous Zalim Singh was also active in this area and his intervention was often vital for Maratha expansion in Rajasthan. Zalim Singh was, among other things, an efficient military entrepreneur. He himself had an intimate connection with the Pindari chiefs. Singh assisted in negotiating the release of Karim Khan from Sindia's captivity and facilitated

the process by agreeing to stand surety for the huge sum (reportedly six to ten lakh rupees) demanded by Sindia as the price of Karim Khan's liberty.⁷⁴

Both Zalim Singh and Jaswant Rao were instrumental in promoting what Peabody has referred to, more specifically in the context of Kota, as the 'colonization of the "inner frontiers"' of their respective domains.⁷⁵ Zalim Singh played a pivotal role in Maratha strategy in south-eastern Rajasthan and northern Malwa. He was the usual choice for dealing with the Rajasthan states in this area on behalf of the Marathas. Moreover he pioneered settlement in this inner frontier. We find him constantly mediating disputes, assisting Sindia and Holkar in the collection of revenue, pushing forward the frontiers of settled agriculture, and mobilizing/recruiting troops from amongst the local population. Holkar had entrusted to him the management of the Chaumahla (Charmahals, i.e. four *mahals*), while Sindia had rented out the adjoining Satmahla (a revenue unit comprising seven *mahals*) to Zalim Singh. Jaswant Singh's holdings were located adjacent to Chaumahla and Satmahla.

In the south-eastern corner of Mandsaur district, a small portion of Malwa comprising Awar, Dag, Gangdhar and Pachpahar—collectively referred to as Chaumahla—lies in the neighbouring Jhalawar district of Rajasthan. Chaumahla originally belonged to Kota, the tribute of which state was divided between Holkar and Sindia in 1744. By the 1780s the annual tribute from Chaumahla was granted to Holkar who, in turn, farmed out the dues to Zalim Singh. After 1818 Holkar was forced by the company to give up his claim to Chaumahla. Awar, Dag, Gangdhar and Pachpahar were handed over to Zalim Singh who had managed this tract very efficiently. Chaumahla was more of a personal acquisition of Zalim Singh and constituted the nucleus of the Jhalawar state that formally came into being in 1838 and was ruled by the descendants of Zalim Singh.⁷⁶ Satmahla denoted the seven *mahals* of Susner, Nalkhera, Soyet, Kanad, Piplon, Barod and Ghusai Basai.⁷⁷ For a long time, Sindia had farmed out these *mahals/parganas* to Zalim Singh.

The administrative arrangements on the eastern and southern fringes of the Satmahla were even more complicated. A large part of this area,

which was on the Sindia border, and on the outskirts of Holkar's outlying possessions (Machalpur, Zirapur), now lies in district Rajgarh. Most of Rajgarh lies in the Umatwara portion of Malwa. Umatwara contained two Rajput principalities, Rajgarh and Narsinghgarh. The ruling families of the two states were closely related to each other. Rajgarh paid tribute to Sindia, while Narsinghgarh was a tributary of Holkar. It may be recalled that Sindia and Holkar had allotted the tribute from the two states, respectively, to Karim Khan and Chitu. The tributary obligations of Rajgarh to the Sindia state continued after 1818. Kota also received a nominal tribute from this area.



In view of the new and more aggressive role that the Pindaris were called upon to play after the Second Anglo-Maratha War it is not surprising that when Lord Hastings embarked upon a fresh round of colonial expansion he regarded the destruction of the Pindaris as a matter of great urgency. What is grandly referred to as the Third Anglo-Maratha War actually began as a campaign against the Pindaris. Hastings had been seeking sanction for launching a war against the Pindaris and even though a conditional sanction was given he was told that 'the authorities at home are unwilling to incur the risk of a general war for the uncertain purpose of extirpating altogether the Pindaris'.⁷⁸ Eventually Hastings was able to convince his superiors that the annihilation of the Pindaris was the key to establishing British supremacy over Malwa.

The anti-Pindari campaign was a major war effort. The company assembled 1,20,000 troops for this war, 'the largest army collected up to that time for one purpose under the British flag in India'.⁷⁹ The Pindaris were caught in a synchronous movement from north and south. The Northern Army was commanded personally by the governor general, while the Southern Army led by Lt. Gen. T. Hislop, the commander-in-chief of the Deccan army, carried out the major operations against the Pindaris. The sheer military might of the company resulted in victory. The success of the company's unprecedented mobilization notwithstanding, this war

produced no glorious battles, barring perhaps the battle of Mehidpur against Holkar's troops (December 1817) in which, however, the British lost 800 men.⁸⁰ That was about all. As for the Pindaris, the bulk of them simply dissolved. There was not a single face-to-face engagement with the Pindaris and though they were chased by the company's contingents that criss-crossed the length and breadth of Malwa, few were captured. Only on one occasion were a sizable number of Pindaris trapped, leaving at least one thousand killed.⁸¹

The refusal of the Pindaris to be coaxed into battle was very much in keeping with the style of warfare they preferred. Malcolm was exasperated that 'no where did they present any point of attack'.⁸² This provides a valuable insight into the nature of Pindari formations. It was generally recognized that 'their chief strength lay in their being intangible'.⁸³ We have already seen how their formations dispersed after raiding expeditions. Elaborate paraphernalia did not burden them since they marched without tents and baggage; they kept their provisions to a minimum. Their overall poverty was reflected in their frugality. The ordinary Pindari was 'satisfied with the coarsest cakes of wheat or Jowaree, parched peas or other grains'.⁸⁴ The fact that they had such few physical needs while on the march made it easy for the Pindari formations to advance and retreat with great speed. Sydenham wrote admiringly that they moved 'with a rapidity perhaps unequalled by the marches of any other cavalry in the world'.⁸⁵ Whereas they normally covered nearly 65 km in a day, when pursued they could march at double that speed. In other words it was possible for them to cross almost the entire length or breadth of Malwa in a week 'over Roads and Hills impassible to Horses unaccustomed to traverse them'. This, according to Sydenham, was just a modest estimate.⁸⁶

Though Chitu seems to have exercised more caution than Karim Khan in that he did not overstep the bounds of his social origin in his relations with Sindia, yet between the two it was Chitu who symbolized much more forcefully the anti-British sentiment of the Maratha-Pindari coalition. This is not the place to go into details of the complicated end-game of the 1818 war. What one would like to mention here is the almost simultaneous

movement of Peshwa Baji Rao II in the direction of Asirgarh, and the escape from British captivity and subsequent flight towards Asirgarh of Appa Sahib (the deposed ruler of Nagpur). Coinciding with this was the retreat of Chitu, from northern Malwa, in the direction of Asirgarh. Unfortunately the full military potential of this convergence could not be realized.

Eventually Chitu was forced to flee to the Vindhya forests as British troops closed in on Asirgarh. Malcolm, who was able to savour the submission of several Pindari, Maratha, Rajput and Pathan leaders, was denied the satisfaction of capturing Chitu alive. Chitu was killed by a tiger in the dense Sita Ban jungle in Limanpur, not far from Satwas, where he had escaped. Malcolm sought the support of the local thakurs to apprehend Chitu. Bhim Singh of Bagli and Nana Zamindar of Kantaphor had offered to help in this task. Chitu was tracked 'like a hunted animal, through the jungles, by the prints of his horse's hoofs'.⁸⁷ Nana found the head of Chitu, 'the rest of the body having been devoured by a tiger', and presented it before Malcolm.⁸⁸

Lying on either side of the Vindhya Range, Bagli and Kantaphor (both in district Dewas) were part of the Sindia state. The road from Kantaphor runs in a south-easterly direction to Satwas and Nemawar. This entire area is not easily accessible. Malcolm described the 'fastnesses between Baglee and Mudleysir [Mandaleshwar]' as being 'chiefly inhabited by Gonds', and added that 'the plundering class who lately occupied them had amongst their followers men of desperate fortunes from Hindustan and other quarters'. He mentioned some 'Native soldiers who had deserted from the service of the Madras army ten years ago [c.1813]' being discovered in this locale.⁸⁹ Bhim Singh himself alluded to the fact that Limanpur could not be cultivated 'because it is a wild woody tract, the abode of thieves and robbers who have here and there inhabited a few hamlets'.⁹⁰ When a dispute arose in the 1840s over the sharing of Bagli revenues, reference was made to the service which Bhim Singh had rendered in cornering Chitu: 'Sir John Malcolm never forgot these services and always treated Bheem Singh with marked attention giving him presents of horses, swords, and guns'.⁹¹

During the war Jaswant Rao had actively aided both Chitu and Karim Khan, ignoring the explicit instructions of Daulat Rao Sindia in this regard: 'In contempt of the orders publicly delivered to him on the part of Scindia, he not only furnished provisions, and every facilitation of progress, to the body of Pindaris retreating under Cheetoo, but he gave to that chief intelligence of the approach of the British troops, and saved him from being cut off.'⁹² Seeing that Jaswant Rao 'could not be prevailed upon to move a man against him', British forces attacked Jawad and captured the town, forcing the sardar to flee the place.⁹³ When the troops entered Jawad they discovered, much to their surprise, that Karim Khan also had been sheltered by the Bhau and had left shortly before the town fell to the British.⁹⁴

Subsequently Jaswant Rao surrendered to the British (14 February 1818) and on the following morning Karim Khan also gave himself up.⁹⁵ Sindia punished Jaswant Rao's defiance by temporarily disowning him. Jaswant Rao's possessions, which had been occupied by the British, were restored to Sindia after the war. However, Sindia refused to reappoint Jaswant Rao. The Bhau continued to petition Daulat Rao and it was only in 1821 that he was restored to favour. Even then, despite his appeals, he was not allowed to resume his former grant. An interesting postscript to this episode was that Jaswant Rao was given the *parganas* of Nemawar and Satwas that had been earlier granted to Chitu.⁹⁶ Nimach, strategically located on the Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan border, was made headquarters of the Rajputana-Malwa charge by the British in 1822 and placed under David Ochterlony. Ochterlony was resident there till 1825. A cantonment for British troops was located on the outskirts of Nimach.⁹⁷ Jaswant Rao never fully regained his former prestige, though he did make a quiet comeback in the early 1830s, acquiring charge of the artillery. He actively participated in the military conflict of 1843 in which he sided with the sections of the army opposed to the company. After 1843 he was exiled from the Gwalior state, and deprived of his property.⁹⁸

The suppression of the Pindaris wrecked a major large-scale attempt on the part of the war-bands of central India, with their nucleus composed of

warriors from the tribal belt whose strength was augmented by discharged troopers and impoverished Malwa peasants, to move out of the narrow confines of their domains and intervene in the high politics of the plateau. After 1818 the vast majority of those who had been members of these bands were still available for service in private armed contingents of petty-chiefs, landlords and powerful bankers. But the scale on which such contingents operated was too small to absorb all the former Pindaris. Eventually thousands of these unemployed men with some military training became the mainstay of central Indian social banditry. In 1822 Ochterlony warned that 'the terror struck by the suppression of the Pindarry system is beginning to subside, and in some Quarters has subsided, and though the present Banditti have not yet assumed an open front, their aggressions are everyday becoming more formidable and more regularly organized'.⁹⁹ The short-circuiting of the Pindari experiment continued to be a source of dislocation, the consequences of which are imperfectly understood. The colonial construction of *thagi* (spelt as 'thuggee' or 'thuggee' in colonial records) that belongs to the period following the Third Anglo-Maratha War was a product of this very dislocation.¹⁰⁰

For the Sindia state the outcome was somewhat more complex. First, there was the general dislocation caused by demobilization of the bulk of the irregular troops. The Sindia state felt the effects of this dislocation along with the smaller states. The impact was more pronounced in some of the outlying areas that formed part of the state. This created conditions for popular resistance, as for instance the uprising led by Lallaji Patel in 1831 in the outlying Sondhwara area of northern Malwa. Second, since the Sindias still had large regular contingents, which were now no longer engaged in campaigns for territorial expansion, large bodies of troops were concentrated in the main cantonments such as Gwalior. These troops increasingly became a powerful factor in Sindia politics. Finally the presence of a large, fairly well-trained army, lent to the Sindia state a degree of stability and independence not enjoyed by most other states which had accepted the company's supremacy after 1818. This situation formed the backdrop to the growing contradictions between the Sindia ruling class and

the company during the 1820s and 1830s, especially in the period following the death of Daulat Rao Sindia when Baiza Bai became the regent of the state. The following chapter looks at the neglected, but crucial, history of the Sindia state during the regency of Baiza Bai.

NOTES

1. Cf. De Boigne to Robert Sutherland, 1 September 1796, Papers of Col. Robert Sutherland, OIOC, MSS Eur D547.
2. De Boigne to Robert Sutherland, 15 January 1797, Sutherland Papers. Cooper refers to de Boigne's 'flight', his conscious decision to leave Sindia's service since he was unable to cope with court intrigues following the death of Mahadji. However, his letters to Sutherland indicate that his health was bad and that this seems to have been the main factor responsible for his decision to retire and return to Europe. 'My stomach is entirely lost; patience is my only comfort', he says in a letter written at the beginning of his sea voyage. In an earlier letter he had remarked that he would return to Europe only as a 'last resource': '[I am] well aware that a single winter would kill me'.
3. De Boigne to Sutherland, 15 January 1797, Sutherland Papers.
4. Eventually Sutherland resigned in 1802 due to differences with Perron.
5. Herbert Compton, *Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784 to 1803*, London, 1892, pp. 31, 46–8, 229. Perron went over to the British side on the eve of the crucial battle of Patparganj. For a detailed discussion on the defection of Perron see Cooper, *Anglo-Maratha Campaigns*, pp. 171, 230–40.
6. 'Abstract of the Military force of the several native powers in India', n.d. (c.1809–14), OIOC, MSS Eur C696.
7. Randolph G.S. Cooper, 'Wellington and the Marathas in 1803', *The International History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (February 1989), p. 33.
8. Cooper, op. cit., p. 32.
9. John Blakiston, *Twelve Years' Military Adventure in Three Quarters of the Globe*, London, 1829, Vol. I, p. 175.
10. A.S. Bennell, 'The Anglo-Maratha War of 1803–5', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. LXIII, No. 255 (Autumn 1985), p. 148.
11. 'Memorandum of the Troops at Gwalior', NAI, FDP, 221/23 March 1844.
12. Compton remarks that Jean Baptiste was 'the single military adventurer of Hindustan who survived the disasters of 1803'. Compton, *European Military Adventurers*, p. 353.
13. The biographical sketch of Michael Filose is based on Compton, *European Military Adventurers*, p. 354; and *Riyasat Gawaliar: Tarikh Jagirdaran*, Gwalior, 1913, Vol. I, 'Sardar Sahiban "A"', p. 132.
14. Compton, *European Military Adventurers*, pp. 352–4.
15. 'At present Baptiste holds his land and forts in *jaidad* only, which makes them resumable at the pleasure of Government and I understand his object now is to obtain some portion of them in *jageer* for his family...'. Gwalior resident to Major Bunce,

- 10 December 1817, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 33. In 1816 Baptiste held lands yielding revenue estimated at Rs. 25–Rs. 30 lakh annually, which would have been about one-fourth to one-third of the total annual land revenue of the state. Gwalior resident to Government of India, 26 May 1816, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 33. On *jaidad* as an assignment of land for the maintenance of troops see Cooper, *Anglo-Maratha Campaigns*, p. 338.
16. Jan Lingen and Kenneth W. Wiggins, *Coins of the Sindhis*, London, 1978, pp. 10, 16.
 17. Cf. Gwalior resident to Government of India, 26 May 1816, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 33.
 18. Clunes, *Itinerary and Directory for Western India*, Appendix, p. 62.
 19. Cf. R. Cavendish, resident, Gwalior, to Government of India, 25 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 40/13 June 1833.
 20. Cf. J. Stewart, acting resident, Gwalior, to Government of India, 5 December 1819, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 33.
 21. Cavendish to Government of India, 23 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 37/13 June 1833.
 22. Jose Alexander, better known as Sikandar, was of Indo-Portuguese origin. He began his career as captain in Jean Baptiste's brigade. His rapid rise was closely linked to Baptiste's temporary eclipse in 1818. Alexander was given charge of some of the battalions that had earlier been under his superior. This was the main cause of the 'implacable enmity' between the two. In 1824 when a dispute erupted between Daulat Rao and Alexander over arrears of pay, it was settled through the intervention of Hindu Rao, the brother of Baiza Bai. The subsequent support he received from Hindu Rao, accelerated Alexander's rise. Cavendish to Government of India, 25 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 40/13 June 1833. For details of the early phase of Alexander's career see Clunes, *Itinerary and Directory for Western India*, Appendix, p. 61.
Alexander remained loyal to Hindu Rao and Baiza Bai when the latter was deposed in 1833. By the late 1830s he had acquired the reputation of being the most capable military leader in the Sindia army. Alexander played a crucial role in the conflict with the company's troops in 1843, after which he was exiled from Gwalior city along with his mother who had been an important figure in the inner circles of the durbar.
 23. Mesrobian Jacob Seth, *Armenians in India: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, second rpt, New Delhi, 2005 (first published, Calcutta, 1937), pp. 135–8.
 24. 'Memorandum of the revenues of the Gwalior State, 1833', NAI, FDP, 223/23 March 1844.
 25. See Chapter 3 of this volume.
 26. 'Memorandum of the troops at Gwalior', NAI, FDP, 221/23 March 1844. Strange though it may seem, Jacob was 88 at this time. If the date of birth mentioned by Seth is correct (the date, 24 March 1755, is reproduced from the trilingual epitaph on Jacob's grave in the Gwalior Armenian cemetery), then he would have been well past the normal age for retirement from military service. We have detailed accounts of his activities in Gwalior in 1843–4, but nothing in these gives the impression of an infirm person. He was regularly consulted on political and military matters and appears to have been mentally quite alert. However, some of his day-to-day military functions

- might have been carried out on his behalf by his two sons, David and John, both of whom were officers under him in the army. Cf. Seth, *Armenians in India*, pp. 138–9, 145.
27. R. Shakespear to W.H. Sleeman, 10 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 569/23 March 1844.
 28. In 1844 when the administration of Gwalior was reorganized under the company's supervision, Col. Filose was entrusted with the management of lands around Gwalior and the district of Sabalgarh. Shakespear to Sleeman, 10 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 569/23 March 1844.
 29. Jean Baptiste's son, Maj. Julian Filose (a.k.a. Baba John), an officer in the Sindia army, passed away in 1840. *Tarikh Jagirdaran*, Vol. I, 'A', p. 132.
 30. See R. Jenkins, resident, Nagpur, 'Memorandum relative to the Pindarries', 1812, *Papers Respecting the Pindarry and Mahratta Wars*, NAI, FD Misc., 124/A, p. 26.
 31. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, Chapter X.
 32. James Tod, 'Origin, Progress and Present State [of the] Pindarras', Gwalior, October 1811, NAI, FD Misc., 124; Jenkins, 'Memorandum'; G. Sydenham, Agent, Berar, 'Memorandum respecting the Pindarries towards the end of the year 1814', 15 October 1814, NAI, FD Misc., 124. Cf. Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, London, 1934 (Allahabad, 1976 rpt), Chapter IX; P.E. Roberts, *History of British India*, 3rd edn, Oxford, 1952, pp. 282–4.
 33. B.K. Sinha, *The Pindaris (1798–1818)*, Calcutta, 1971, p. 61. Cf. also Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, pp. 428–9.
 34. For example, Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 8; Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, pp. 431, 433.
 35. S.N. Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas*, Bombay, 1958, pp. 74 ff.
 36. The supposed reference to the Pindaris in the *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, is a misreading. Sydenham, using Capt. Jonathan Scott's translation (*Firishta's History of the Deccan*, London, 1794, Vol. II, pp. 121–2), stated that the Pindaris 'are first mentioned in Ferishta, ... in his memoirs of Aurangzeb's operations in the Deckan, where he relates their having plundered the districts about Beejapore in conjunction with some rebellious Zemindars in the year 1689'. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 37. Sydenham compounded the error by using the wrong era and thereby making Firishta, who resided at Bijapur from 1591 till his death in 1623, a contemporary of Aurangzeb. The mistake was repeated by Malcolm (*Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 426 and n) and was carelessly reproduced in later writings. The notion that the Pindaris were a product of the seventeenth century persisted in works such as those of G.S. Sardesai, which otherwise revealed a thorough grasp of Maratha history (G.S. Sardesai, *A New History of the Marathas*, Vol. III, Bombay, 1948, p. 477).
- It should be emphasized that the Pindaris were essentially a phenomenon of the last quarter of the eighteenth century and more than a century separated the formation of this identity from Aurangzeb's Dakhan campaigns. Significantly, Bhimsen's important memoir of these campaigns, *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, written almost a hundred years after the *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, does not mention the Pindaris (V.G. Khobrekhar, ed., *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha* of Bhimsen, tr., Jadunath Sarkar, Bombay, 1972). Bhimsen was no stranger to the region that later became the main Pindari zone, since both he and his father had served in Malwa and Dakhan for a long time. Moreover, as Stewart Gordon

- observes, the Maratha identity and military ethos itself was still evolving during the seventeenth century (Stewart Gordon, 'Zones of Military Entrepreneurship in India, 1500–1700', in Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders*, pp. 193–4).
37. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 433 n. According to Malcolm, Karim Khan, one of the foremost Pindari leaders, stated that 'he had never heard any other reason given for this name' except that it was derived from 'an intoxicated [*sic*] drink termed Pinda'. It is significant that Karim Khan showed little interest in advancing a plausible theory about the origin of the Pindaris. He appears to have casually mentioned this etymology during the course of his interview with Malcolm shortly after his surrender, when he must have had more pressing problems on his mind.
 38. Sinha, *Pindaris*, p. 2; Interview, Shri N.C. Zamindar, Indore, 1991 (Zamindar was scion of the Mandloi family of Indore). Sardesai notes that 'the etymology of the Marathi word Pendha or Pendhar is doubtful. It means a body of stragglers . . .'. Sardesai, *Marathas*, Vol. III, p. 477, n. 8.
 39. R.V. Russell and Hira Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol. IV, rpt, Delhi, 1975, p. 388. The Pindaris never became a fashionable subject for anthropological investigation since they were not a typical ethnic group. Further, they had no distinctive or exotic practices and beliefs which an anthropologist might have found exciting.
 40. C.A. Elliott quoted in Charles Grant, ed., *Gazetteer of Central Provinces of India*, 2nd edn, 1870 (rpt, Delhi, 1984), p. xcv, n.
 41. William Irvine in an article entitled 'Etymology of the Word Pindhari' (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXIX, May 1900), argued that the term is derived from the word 'pandhar' which broadly referred to a region that included Hoshangabad, Nemawar and Handia on the Narmada. Cited by Sinha, *Pindaris*, pp. 3–4. While tracing the early history of the Pindaris, Sydenham emphasized their connection with the Narmada region: 'in 1794 they are said to have established themselves on the Banks of the Nerbudda, and from that period to have increased progressively in consequence and power'. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 38.
 42. Jenkins, 'Memorandum', p. 30.
 43. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 46. Malcolm in his *Memoir* incorrectly mentions Nimar instead of Nemawar as one of Chitu's possessions. This was apparently just a slip on the part of the author since he was too well acquainted with the region to make an error of this kind. See Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, pp. 444–5.
 44. Jenkins, 'Memorandum' p. 30; *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, p. 28; P.N. Shrivastav, *Madhya Pradesh Gazetteers, Narsimhapur* (hereafter *Narsimhapur Gazetteer*), Bhopal, 1971, pp. 2; 54 n. 1, 2.
 45. *Narsimhapur Gazetteer*, p. 2.
 46. Sumit Guha notes that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century 'the Gond territory extended as far west as Mandaleshwar on the Narmada river [district West Nimar], and eastward into Western Orissa and Chotanagpur'. Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200–1991*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 122.
 47. Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India*, pp. 126–7.

48. Cf. James Tod, 'Journal', August-September 1813, NAI, FD Misc., 124, p. 30; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 41.
49. 'Report of Commission . . . to enquire into Pindary invasion of Guntur, Masulipatam, Cuddappa', 31 January 1817, FD, Misc., 124/A, p. 56. This report, from which later historical accounts have quoted extensively, needs to be treated with some caution since it was very unusual for the Pindaris to operate so far down south. Moreover this was an isolated case which makes one wonder whether it was a Pindari raid at all. Nevertheless what is pertinent is that contemporary officials did not have a homogeneous group in mind while describing the Pindaris.
50. Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity*, p. 121.
51. Cf. Surajit Sinha, 'State Formation and the Rajput Myth in Central India', in H. Kulke, ed., *The State in India 1000-1700*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 304 ff.
52. Cf. Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity*, pp. 110-6.
53. Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, New York, 1990, pp. 57-8.
54. Sumit Guha, 'Forest politics and agrarian empires: The Khandesh Bhils, c. 1700-1850', *IESHR*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (1996), p. 136.
55. Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 6.
56. Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 6; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', pp. 49-51.
57. Cf. Stewart Gordon, 'Legitimacy and Loyalty in Some Successor States', in Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders*, pp. 65 ff.
58. Berasia (district Bhopal) was the birthplace of Karim Khan. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 449.
59. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 449; Capt. William Henley, agent, eastern Malwa, to Stewart, Gwalior, 19 February 1819, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 45; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 51.
60. Jenkins, 'Memorandum', p. 26.
61. Jenkins talks of 'accessions which the result of the Mahratta wars must have brought them [the Pindaris], from the starving bodies of horse which the peace dispersed over Malwah'. Jenkins, 'Memorandum', p. 26.
62. Jenkins, 'Memorandum', p. 26.
63. Quoted in C.E. Luard and D.N. Sheopuri, *Gwalior State Gazetteer*, Calcutta, 1908, p. 33 n.
64. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 40.
65. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 431.
66. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 40.
67. Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 7; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', pp. 45, 55; Malcolm, *Memoir*, p. 441 n. 'Mustaqim' means faithful, firm.
68. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 48.
69. Ibid.
70. Chitu, for instance, had originally been a slave. He was probably a Jat or a Meo. Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 17; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 44. The Pindari leaders never really managed to settle down and so were unable to manufacture impressive genealogies

for themselves. Their humble origins are reflected in the commonplace names of a number of Pindari warriors: Chitu, Hiru, Rajjan, Gangola, Jangli, Kallu, Shukku, Nathu, Tukku, Buddan, etc.

71. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, pp. 436–7.
72. Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 17.
73. Cf. Lord Hastings, 'Narrative of Military and Political Operations in Hindoostan and the Deccan', 1 March 1820, NAI, FD Misc., 124/A, p. 400.
74. Bengal Government to Secret Committee, 16 August 1811, NAI, FD Misc., 124/A, p. 1; Tod, 'Pindarras', p. 12; Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 51; Malcolm, *Memoir*, p. 455. It is not unlikely that Zalim Singh made a large profit out of this guarantee. He was an astute banker and was engaged in various commercial dealings, including the supply of opium. One suspects that some of the Pindari chiefs might have maintained accounts with Zalim Singh and that he was willing to stand surety for such a large sum precisely because he had access to Karim Khan's deposits. Given the fact that the Pindaris led a rather insecure existence and were constantly on the move, they had to rely on the services of bankers to look after their financial arrangements. In the absence of a regular treasury this was indispensable. We learn that Dhakun (Dakhan?) Seth was the main banker of Chitu's camp. Another banker, Mowjee Ram, was also attached to Chitu. These bankers and *sahukars* advanced money to the Pindaris for the purchase of horses and food and were repaid from the proceeds of tribute collections and raiding expeditions. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 49.
75. Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, p. 130.
76. H.B. Abbott, *Jhalawar Gazetteer, The Rajputana Gazetteer*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1879, pp. 186, 188, 204, 285; B.N. Dhoundiyal, *Rajasthan District Gazetteers, Jhalawar*, Jaipur, 1964, pp. 1–2; Savitri Gupta, *Rajasthan District Gazetteers, Kota*, Jaipur, 1982, pp. 37, 39; M.L. Sharma, *Kota Rajya ka Itihasa*, Kota, Samvat era 1996, Vol. II, p. 509; S.C. Misra, *Sindhia-Holkar Rivalry in Rajasthan*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 17, 19, 188.
77. Susner, Nalkhera and Soyot are in the Susner *tehsil* of Shajapur district (Madhya Pradesh); Kanad, Piplon and Barod are in the Agar *tehsil* of the same district. Ghusai Basai, detached from the main block of the Satmahla *parganas*, is in Mandsaar.
78. Canning quoted in C.H. Philips, *The East India Company 1784–1834*, Indian edn, Bombay, 1961, p. 215.
79. Maj. Ross-of-Blandensburg, *The Marquess of Hastings*, Oxford, 1893, p. 113.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
81. Maj. R. Clarke to Capt. W. Henley, 14 January 1818, FD, Misc., 124/A, p. 303.
82. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 431.
83. *Ibid.*
84. Sydenham, 'Memorandum', p. 41.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
86. *Ibid.*
87. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 447.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 447–8; R.N. Hamilton, resident, Gwalior, to H.M. Elliot, secretary, Government of India, 22 July 1850, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 129.

89. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 522 and n.
90. Thakur Salim Singh and Kunwar Bhim Singh of Bagli to Maj. W. Henley, 1877 (Samvat), tr., NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 129.
91. Hamilton to Elliot, 11 July 1850, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 129.
92. Hastings to Court of Directors, 8 February 1818, NAI, FD Misc., 124/A, pp. 204–5.
93. Hastings, 'Narrative', 124/A, p. 400; J. Blacker, quarter-master-general, to Major-General W.G. Keir, 6 February 1818, NAI, FD Misc., 124/A, p. 332.
94. Hastings, 'Narrative', pp. 400–1.
95. Malcolm to F. Warden, secretary, Bombay Government, 17 February 1818, NAI, FD Misc., p. 238.
96. R. Close, resident, Gwalior to Henley, 4 November 1821; *Sanad* from Daulat Rao Sindia to Jaswant Rao, 2 Muharram 1222 fasli, tr. NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 102.
97. NAI, Survey of India Memoirs, 36/11; *Gwalior State Gazetteer*, p. 275.
98. Sleeman to Government of India, 15 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 716/23 March 1844.
99. David Ochterlony, resident in Malwa and Rajputana, to G. Swinton, secretary, Government of India, 30 April 1822, N.K. Sinha and A.K. Dasgupta, ed., *Selections from Ochterlony Papers (1818–1825)*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 244.
100. In the colonial perception *thagi* was associated with a well-organized cult of ritual stranglers who robbed travellers. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, colonial officials, of whom W.H. Sleeman was the most prominent, articulated such a perception of what was actually a widespread phenomenon of social banditry. For a reappraisal of the *thagi* phenomenon, see Stewart Gordon, 'Scarf and Sword: Thugs, Marauders, and State-formation in Eighteenth-Century Malwa', in Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders*, pp. 1–22.



The Regency of Baiṛa Bai

BAIZA BAI IS A forgotten historical figure. However, she occupies considerable space in colonial records relating to Gwalior, Malwa, and the Central India Agency for a fairly long period, c.1800 to 1860—especially the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Constant references to her exist in official correspondence extending over nearly half a century, making possible a continuous narrative of her public life. This is significant considering that Baiṛa Bai had full-fledged control over the Gwalior state for just six years, and was then exiled for nearly fifteen years. Her conspicuous presence in the colonial records is an indication of her extensive political influence, an influence that was closely related to her position within a strong anti-colonial tradition. Baiṛa Bai was a widow for the last 36 years of her life and her influence was largely the result of her own resourcefulness, skills and personality (her political position being reinforced by her career as a very successful banker). In the detailed references to her in colonial records we already have a fairly complete chronologically-arranged political biography of Baiṛa Bai.

A person of exceptional talent, she contributed in no small measure to the success of Daulat Rao in preventing the collapse of the Sindia state in the post-1818 period. The twenties and early thirties marked the peak of her political career, especially the period 1827-33 when she was the regent of the Sindia state. This was an important phase when the state was set in

a direction that it was to retain for some time even after the regency came to an end.

Married to Daulat Rao in 1798, at the age of fourteen, she was his third wife. Durga Bai and Rukma Bai, the first and second wives respectively, were married to him before he had become king.¹ That Baiza Bai became Daulat Rao's wife after his enthronement, distinguished her from the first two wives, immediately giving to her a special status. Though she was not the seniormost wife, Baiza's political involvement soon made her Daulat Rao's partner in government. Of his second wife, Rukma Bai, Daulat Rao is reported to have said: 'She is fit only to sit quietly in her own house, and to eat her food and nothing else'.² This kind of remark might have been occasioned to some extent by an infatuation for the younger wife, but at the same time it indicated the sharp contrast between the personalities of the two women. Whereas Durga Bai had passed away in 1812, Rukma Bai lived on for several years after Daulat Rao's death but unlike Baiza Bai she 'lived a life of entire seclusion, knew nothing of public affairs, and never appeared to take any interest in them'.³

Baiza Bai did not confine herself to the routine life of the women's quarters and seems to have been engaged in the high politics of the state and its durbar soon after her marriage. This was facilitated by the emergence of her father, Sakham Rao Ghatge (better known by his title Sarje Rao), as one of Sindia's main advisers. The fact that Ghatge was the maharaja's father-in-law in turn reinforced his position at the court. This was the time when, at the turn of the century, the struggle between Daulat Rao and Yashwant Rao Holkar had entered a critical stage. This was also the time when Lord Wellesley launched a major military offensive to subjugate the Maratha states—the Second Anglo-Maratha War. Baiza Bai, who 'was a bold and skilful horsewoman, and could use [at least in her younger days] both spear and sword', accompanied Daulat Rao on some of the Sindia military campaigns. She was reportedly present at the battle of Assaye (1803).⁴ The English travel writer Fanny Parkes provided a fascinating first-hand account, in her journal, of the proficiency with which women of

Baiza Bai's entourage-in-exile handled horses and of the Bai's own expert knowledge of equestrian matters.⁵

Sarje Rao was a fierce critic of British intervention in Sindia affairs. Against the backdrop of attempts by the company to engineer defections among senior European officials of the Sindia army on the eve of, and during, the military campaigns of 1803, he actively pushed for the expulsion of pro-British elements from the army. Cooper remarks that, 'Sargi Rao Ghatke was among those Maratha leaders in Sindia's *darbar* that considered the option of a blood purge'.⁶

His opposition cost him his place at the *darbar* when at the end of the war the company insisted on his ejection.⁷ The lesson of this reprisal, and of the subsequent trauma which she must have endured when Ghatge was assassinated in open *darbar* a few years later (1809),⁸ could not have been lost on Baiza. At the time of the Third Anglo-Maratha War Baiza Bai was 'the head of the war-faction or party in opposition to British interests'.⁹ Differences surfaced between Daulat Rao and his wife over the question of supporting Peshwa Baji Rao II. Baiza, together with her brother Hindu Rao (Sarje Jai Singh Rao Ghatge), had urged Sindia to actively assist Baji Rao in his final struggle against the British in 1818. Baiza Bai briefly parted company from Daulat Rao 'on account of his pusillanimity in submitting to our [British] demands'.¹⁰ She had even commenced marching in the direction of the Deccan to join Baji Rao. Nearly fifteen years later the British resident at Gwalior still considered it relevant that the Bai 'during the life of her husband ... did all in her power to involve Scindia with our Government to uphold the ex-Peshwa, Bajee Rao'.¹¹ Baiza also strongly resisted the cession of Ajmer, Sindia's strategically located base in Rajasthan, to the British in 1818.¹²

After 1818 Baiza Bai was constantly by Daulat Rao's side helping him and the leading officials of the *darbar* to develop a policy that would allow the Sindia state to retain a great measure of its independence. When Daulat Rao passed away in March 1827 there was little doubt that Baiza would assume charge of the state. Daulat Rao's health had begun deteriorating

in October 1826.¹³ During his illness he had made it quite clear that he considered Baiza Bai as his successor: 'from his never having expressed any wish to adopt a son [Daulat Rao did not have any male child], it was inferred that he wished to leave the government of his country at his death to ... Bysa Bae'.¹⁴ The fact that Daulat Rao was not inclined to adopt an heir had set the East India Company speculating about the future of the state. As early as 1822 it had begun to consider various possibilities, including that of annexing the entire state or partitioning it between itself and other Malwa states:

We might either take the whole country ourselves or ... we might make a Partition of Sindia's present Territories retaining in our own hands only so much of them as would produce a revenue adequate to maintain the requisite establishment for performing all the offices of a permanent and controlling power and to provide for those relatives of Sindia's or the dependents of this government who might have a reasonable claim on us for support. ...

The Governments of Bopaul, Bondee, Kotah and Oudipoor as well as Holkar and perhaps Meer Khan [Amir Khan of Tonk] might also be admitted to share in the distribution, care being taken to restore to each as nearly as could be what they had already lost by the Encroachments of Sindia's authority.¹⁵

The company, however, made no move to disturb the status of the state after Daulat Rao's death. The authority that Baiza Bai had already acquired ensured that her take-over was quite smooth. In 1827 she became the ruler of the Sindia raj. Yet she was internally under great pressure to adopt a male heir. She reluctantly adopted a son who was placed on the throne as Jankoji Rao. This was an eleven-year-old boy Mukut Rao, who belonged to a distant branch of the family. He 'was declared to be the nearest relation of the late Maharaja who could from his age, be adopted'.¹⁶ Jankoji's father, Pattoba, was an ordinary soldier in the Sindia army and a peasant by social origin.¹⁷ There seems to have been very little affection between father and son; Jankoji was more attached to his maternal uncle, usually referred to as Mama Sahib, who had brought him up. Pattoba was to later become a bit of a problem for the British when he attempted to realize his own political ambitions.¹⁸

Jankoji was a minor when he was made the maharaja, and Baiza Bai

ruled the state as regent on his behalf. As far as Baiza Bai was concerned Jankoji was only to be the nominal head of the state, even after he attained majority, i.e. she would be regent for life. Baiza regarded her authority as supreme and indivisible; she was absolute sovereign while Jankoji was to have no real share in power. As mentioned earlier it appears that it had been Daulat Rao's intention that the government should be entrusted to his consort after his death, and he had made this clear to the British resident as well.¹⁹ On one of the rare occasions when, during her regency, she condescended to communicate directly with the resident, Baiza Bai had declared, 'Friendship requires that during my lifetime I should be allowed to retain the supreme control of affairs and the administration of the Government in my own hands, as it was held by the late Maharajah'.²⁰

Throughout the twenties the dominant mood at the Gwalior durbar was one of unrelenting animosity towards the East India Company. The regency of Baiza Bai saw an intensification of this mood. What is more, Baiza Bai seems to have been personally more aggressive in her manner whereas Daulat Rao was supposed to have been mild-tempered 'and gentle in the extreme'.²¹

Daulat Rao's widow was too independent a ruler for the company's comfort. The British therefore tried to ensure that she did not have time to settle down. This they did by championing the cause of the adopted maharaja even while Jankoji was still a minor. The governor general sent off a letter to the regent in October 1829 asking her to accord proper respect to the maharaja. The maharaja was to be made visible by, among other things, having his name engraved on the seals of the state and having official documents issued in his name. He was to be allowed to hold authentic public durbars, rather than the meaningless ritual of seating the maharaja in a nominal durbar 'only attended by menials of the Household, while the Sirdars and Ministers going to the Bye's Purda merely made a Salam and passed on'.²² Even the nominal durbar was a concession granted to the child maharaja by Baiza Bai due to the company's pressure.

The Bai, however, considered the governor general's 'advice' to be an unacceptable interference in the affairs of the state and indicated this

by not taking note of his communication for several months.²³ When after persistent reminders from the resident she formulated her response, she was explicit that she would comply only to the extent that her own authority was not tampered with. The maharaja would merely have a ceremonial presence. As we shall see this was sufficient to give Baiza Bai's opponents at the durbar a toehold, partly by playing upon the ambitions of the politically raw Jankoji. For the time being Baiza Bai continued to keep the maharaja under strict surveillance. She also became more assertive of her independence, though she never allowed her diplomatic relations with the company to break down completely.

Even as debate over the status of Jankoji continued, Baiza Bai raised the issue of a large loan of Rs. 80 lakh which she had advanced to the British in 1827. The East India Company had approached Baiza Bai for a loan of Rs. 1 crore soon after the death of Daulat Rao. Though this was not explicitly stated to be a precondition for recognizing her as regent yet 'she may have thought it politic to accede to a request so earnestly pressed upon her'.²⁴ Of the Rs. 1 crore which the company had applied for, she arranged to lend Rs. 80 lakh. In the opinion of the resident one of her objectives in lending the sum was 'obviously to conciliate the favour of the British Government and obtain a recognition of her Regency for life'.²⁵

The company deliberately kept details pertaining to the mode of repayment vague, obviously hoping that the loan might eventually be written off. The regent, as soon as she was firmly in saddle, insisted on a formal acknowledgement specifically stating that the sum (both principal and interest) was due to her personally. When in 1830 Baiza Bai urgently demanded the acknowledgement, the company began to backtrack on its commitment by requiring her to prove that the money 'had been produced from her own private Funds and not from the treasure of the State'.²⁶ George Fielding, the acting resident, though he was not particularly sympathetic to Baiza Bai, found this somewhat embarrassing and reminded the supreme government that at the time when the loan was negotiated by his superior (Major J. Stewart), the resident 'gave Her Highness to understand most clearly and positively that the principal money lent should be

considered exclusively hers, and that the Interest should be paid to any person to whom she might assign it ... I know that such was Major Stewart's declaration from conversation since I came here'.²⁷

The company soon found that leading bankers, particularly Mani Ram (whom we have already met earlier), were under pressure from the regent not to extend any further credit to it. When Mani Ram was approached for a sum, he refused to advance it though 'he does not profess inability to do so, neither is he at all indisposed to comply with His Lordship's [Bentinck] wishes on this subject, but he is afraid of incurring the displeasure of Her Highness the Baiza Bhye, and is consequently very averse to take any part in a transaction against which she has decidedly set her face'.²⁸ The company relied heavily on indigenous credit in Malwa and Gwalior to finance its military/commercial activities in central and north India. This is a problem that had defied solution throughout the twenties, due to the failure of the company to bring the economy of the region fully under its control. Its inability to regulate discount rates for bills of exchange was a manifestation of this, as was the collapse of the Malwa opium monopoly.²⁹

Baiza Bai finally had her own way. The loan was repaid to her in her individual capacity. Whether or not this constituted a defalcation of state finances, the amount certainly did not remain in the company's treasury. In fact Baiza saw to it that the money was paid at Benares, where she had a banking firm. The British admitted that the regent had got the better of them: '... the publicity which it was desirable to give to the fact of our repayment of the Loan, will not have been so well effected as if the money had been paid into the Treasury of the Maha Rajah at Gwalior: and further that the payment at Benaras is calculated and designed to aid the Bae in the purpose, which she has always manifested, of appropriating to herself the money of that Loan'. It was regretted that this tended 'to defeat the intentions with which the payment of the Loan was undertaken'.³⁰ For the payment of the loan the company had to look to Mani Ram, who made a profit twice over since he had originally advanced a large part of the money to Baiza Bai.³¹

At a more basic level, Baiza Bai sought to clip the wings of the resident in

order to minimize his capacity to meddle in the affairs of Gwalior. Of course the Sindias had never accorded British residents a very high diplomatic status, but the Bai definitely intended to cut the resident to size. The institution of the colonial resident/political agent did not evolve uniformly in the various princely states. Though the East India Company had maintained a 'resident' at the Sindia durbar since the time of Mahadji, the British representative was little more than a glorified newswriter (*akhbar nawis*) till the beginning of the century. After 1818 the resident's political status still remained somewhat ambiguous, Daulat Rao's acceptance of British paramountcy notwithstanding. The term usually used for the resident was *vakil* (ambassador; agent; representative).³² In terms of court protocol this made him indistinguishable from the *vakils* or representatives/newswriters of other indigenously ruled states in attendance on the durbar. The routine appointment of *vakils* to various courts by rulers, chiefs and big *zamindars* was a common practice. The resident's camp at Gwalior was commonly referred to as *vakil ki chhauni* (cantonment of the *vakil*). Michael Fisher in his study of the evolution of the residency system suggests that 'the Company's agents did not fit into any pre-existing Mughal category'.³³ This does not seem to have been the case, at least in north India. The durbars of states which had inherited and incorporated Mughal traditions of the late eighteenth century placed the company's representatives within the readily available framework of the *vakil* and his establishment. This perception was at variance with the exalted status that the company claimed for its representatives.

It needs to be underlined, as we shall see later in the context of the events of 1843, that from the point of view of the Sindia durbar the resident's establishment was primarily engaged in the (entirely legitimate) business of intelligence-gathering. This was something that other *vakils* and newswriters were obviously also supposed to be doing. However, this also meant that certain rules had to be observed, especially the restrictions imposed on interaction with the subjects of the state. The inhabitants of Sindia territories were prohibited any intercourse with the resident as also perhaps with other *vakils*. In turn the *vakils* were not permitted to reside

within the limits of the city: 'a more suspicious and distant durbar does not exist'.³⁴ The protocol governing the relationship between the Sindia durbar and the company's resident was well established, though reluctantly recognized by British authorities in Calcutta. When one of the incumbents took exception to the fact that the sentry at the palace gate did not salute him, Fort William asked him to 'refrain from attempting any innovation in the forms hitherto observed towards the British Representative at the Court of Gwalior'.³⁵ It is not really till the 1840s that the Gwalior residency came into its own. During Baiza Bai's regency there certainly was no such thing as an omnipotent resident at Gwalior.

R. Cavendish, upon his arrival at Gwalior in 1832 as the new resident, found himself completely ignored, confirming 'the reports that Her Highness is herself anxious to have as little attention as possible paid to the Resident by her subjects with the view of showing her own independence and dislike for the English'.³⁶ He observed that 'now all imagine that they please the Court and prove their fidelity by their rudeness and insulting bearing towards us'.³⁷ Cavendish had already had some unpleasant experiences on his way to the Sindia capital. At one place he could not procure any firewood and when he 'sent into the village to purchase some, people refused to give or sell it and used such language as cannot be written'.³⁸ At Gwalior no hospitality was extended to him:

It would have been supposed Her Highness would have shown me some attention on my arrival at her court as Resident; no person was sent to meet me, until within a mile of the Residency; not a stick of wood or earthen vessel was procurable for hours for sale. I had to wait one or two hours for the breakfast, though I arrived not till after 8 o'clock, one seer of wood not being procurable. From the acting resident and officers of the escort I found that such was the usual conduct of the Regent and her people . . .³⁹

The resident was shocked at the behaviour of Sindia's troops, especially the palace guards commanded by Col. Jacob. In a complaint addressed to the regent, Cavendish stated, 'It is my custom to walk and ride out of a morning and evening and I have several times been insulted by Colonel Jacob's sepahs and servants and pushed off the road'.⁴⁰ Unable to put up with his inferior diplomatic status Cavendish suggested that the residency be temporarily shifted out of the Gwalior territory to neighbouring

Dholpur so that the resident 'will not be considered as an appendage of the Court, who can be summoned any day or at any hour to dance attendance ("Mulazmut" [service, duty], is the usual word) on the Court as the Company's Vaqueel, to sit on the ground without shoes on the left side instead of the right side, which is the place of honor, of the Maharaja's throne'.⁴¹ The resident, though not necessarily the company, was marginal to Gwalior politics.



In 1833 Baiza Bai's regency came to an abrupt and unexpected end. The British were not directly involved in her ouster, though the process of creating a rival centre of power around Jankoji which they had set in motion contributed to Baiza's removal. In a letter addressed to the supreme government a few weeks before the coup against her, Cavendish was sufficiently forthright in admitting that the company had seriously undermined her position, although he afterwards denied that the British were to be blamed in any way:

I think the Bae is not aware of her own weakness and unpopularity or, I may say, of the difficulties of her situation, attributable in degree to the decided and active part we originally took against her and in favour of the Maharaja for bringing about his hasty and forced adoption, [and] having him acknowledged as Head of the Government . . .⁴²

The factors underlying the events of 1833 are complex. One factor was the East India Company's determination to project Jankoji as the real ruler of Gwalior and thereby promote a pro-British faction at the durbar. Another was the death of Baiza Bai's prime minister Raoji Trimbak in 1832. Trimbak had been instrumental in implementing fiscal reforms which were aimed at establishing centralized control over finances. This seems to have been a long-term policy of Daulat Rao and Baiza Bai, which required a delicate operation calling for considerable skill in dealing with powerful revenue farmers and military chieftains. Trimbak with his vast administrative experience—he had served the Indore state for several years and was Holkar's prime minister for a year before shifting to Gwalior at the end of the twenties—had achieved a measure of success in this direction.

After Trimbak's death Baiza continued to pursue this policy vigorously, but in the absence of someone to handle the job with the circumspection that it required, she only succeeded in increasing the number of her opponents. These included the mighty Mani Ram, who held the revenue farm for Gwalior *suba*, and Col. Jacob, who held a large land grant for the upkeep of troops. Both had not rendered accounts for several years. To add to the problems of Mani Ram and Jacob there was a crop failure in 1833.⁴³ Trimbak had decided to resume Jacob's grant and maintain the troops directly, while Mani Ram had been asked to pay the more than Rs. 1 crore that he owed to the state. Baiza Bai did not let up the pressure for the recovery of the outstanding dues.

Apart from attempting to resume the lands assigned for Col. Jacob's brigade, it was also proposed to reduce the numerical strength of the contingent by as much as half. Baiza Bai even threatened to arrest Col. Jacob.⁴⁴ Measures such as these would naturally have caused considerable resentment.⁴⁵ It may be mentioned that Jacob's brigade 'had always been the best disciplined and the best conducted of Sindia's troops'.⁴⁶ These troops were paid punctually for which reason they did not cause much trouble unlike Filose's troops—called 'the fighting brigade'.⁴⁷ Given that Jacob's brigade was more disciplined, the durbar preferred to station it at Gwalior. However, the physical presence of these troops in the capital could become the cause of an upheaval if their interests were threatened, as happened due to the proposed measures of Trimbak. As for Mani Ram he seems to have taken advantage of his position as a partner in a joint-stock concern with Daulat Rao and Baiza Bai, 'and according to her account, he owed the state at that time two crore rupees'.⁴⁸ Against the backdrop of the moves against Mani Ram and Col. Jacob, the anti-Baiza groups at the durbar united to remove her from power. Significantly, the resident specifically suggested to the regent that she abstain from 'from inspecting Colonel Jacob's and Munnee Ram's accounts'.⁴⁹ This he perceived to be the core issue.

Baiza Bai regarded her power as absolute and was averse to sharing it. This naturally alienated many powerful figures at the durbar. Then there

was her reserved manner. Baiza was aware how vulnerable her position was since a woman ruler with real power was not easily acceptable. Cavendish, whose own despatches contain several sexist remarks,⁵⁰ found many at the Gwalior durbar objecting 'to the rule of a woman, because they are kept at a distance and cannot be familiar with her'. Her aloofness was in sharp contrast to the uninhibited style of the late maharaja: 'the Bae is extremely distant [and] has no affection for them ... Maharaja Dowlut Rao was the reverse, being profuse, open, easy of access and a great dissembler'.⁵¹ More than anything Baiza had to be constantly on her guard against the possible scandals which any show of intimacy could give rise to—the easiest way to demolish a woman's political career. In this she was successful. There was not the slightest hint of a personal scandal associated with her down to the end of her days. British officials, always quick to run down Indian rulers and chiefs for their sexual morality, conceded that 'the Bae's private character' was 'unimpeachable'. This was, however, attributed to Baiza Bai's 'ambition and the love of power' which had 'quite absorbed her tender passions, if they ever troubled her bosom'.⁵² Thus, Baiza Bai was held in great awe and treated with utmost deference even when out of power.

Ultimately, however, it was the loss of support within the army that resulted in a successful bloodless coup against the regent. Trouble had been brewing at Gwalior for several months, but the Bai was quite unprepared for the swiftness with which a section of the soldiers and military leaders overthrew her. Cavendish, who himself was caught somewhat unawares, refused to intervene on her behalf. All that he was willing to do was to negotiate a safe passage for Baiza Bai and her followers.

Since the beginning of 1833 a realignment of forces had been taking place at Gwalior, a realignment in which a pivotal role seems to have been played by Hindu Rao. In the fluid political scenario following the death of Daulat Rao, Hindu Rao had attempted to use his influence as the regent's brother (and Sarje Rao's son) to become a key power-broker. He teamed up with Atma Ram, the *vakil* appointed by the durbar for communicating with the residency, to convey an impression of proximity to the British. Among other things, this was intended to 'prevent the Bae from becoming too

independent and to keep her in awe of the British Government'.⁵³ At the same time the charismatic Hindu Rao counted among his clients military officers who were not particularly pro-British. His principal supporter among the military officials was Col. Alexander, generally recognized as the most competent among the officers of Sindia's infantry brigades.

The relationship between Baiza Bai and Hindu Rao went through various ups and downs between 1827 and 1833, though by and large the two were not on very friendly terms for most of this period. As Baiza Bai consolidated her position, she successfully managed to reduce the political clout of her brother. Atma Ram was replaced with Raoji Trimbak as the channel of communication with the residency, thereby depriving Hindu Rao access to the company's representatives. Col. Alexander was persuaded to switch his allegiance to the regent. Meanwhile, Ram Rao Phalke, one of the leading commanders of the Maratha horse, was mobilizing support for Jankoji Rao in order to weaken Baiza Bai's hold over the state. There were reports of clandestine meetings between Jankoji and Phalke, during the course of which Phalke might have encouraged the maharaja to defy the regent.⁵⁴ We shall have occasion to discuss Phalke at greater length later. It would suffice to mention here that he remained the company's most reliable collaborator at Gwalior for over two decades.

Then in the last week of June, Hindu Rao dramatically announced his reconciliation with Baiza Bai, precipitating a crisis.⁵⁵ This formidable combination threatened to disrupt the prevailing balance of power in the state. If the new arrangement was allowed to stabilize, the lobby opposed to the regent would be marginalized, which, in the long run would threaten the interests of the company and its collaborators. Ironically, Hindu Rao's manoeuvres proved to be counter-productive since they caused a panic among the opponents of Baiza Bai driving them towards open rebellion. Baiza Bai's daughter later attributed 'her mother's misfortunes to her Uncle Hindoo Rao's past and present intrigues'.⁵⁶ Perhaps the anti-Baiza lobby felt that the only option left to it now was the immediate overthrow of the regent. Between 10 and 12 July 1833 a large section of the army was persuaded to declare itself in favour of Jankoji. This included, as might

have been expected, the brigade under Col. Jacob and the contingents of Maratha horse, as well as the artillery. Finding her palace surrounded by Col. Jacob's troops, Baiza Bai fled to Hindu Rao's house and from there to the residency, where she was granted shelter on the 'understanding that she had resigned the government'.⁵⁷ Significantly, the 1833 coup brings out sharply the decisive role of the Gwalior army. This was to remain a recurring feature of Sindia politics till the 1857 Revolt.

Those who accompanied the deposed regent included Hindu Rao; Col. Alexander and his troops, who had remained loyal to the regent; Daulat Rao's only surviving daughter Chimna Bai; and Chimna Bai's husband Appa Sahib Patankar. Col. Alexander and his troops returned to Gwalior after a few months, once it had become apparent that the restoration of Baiza Bai was unlikely. Hindu Rao withdrew himself completely from Sindia affairs and settled down in Delhi, lending his name to a new suburb of the city, Bara Hindu Rao—a thriving, bustling locality today. Chimna Bai who was pregnant when she left Gwalior died in childbirth shortly afterwards, adding to the misfortunes of her mother. Appa Sahib, with whose father Man Singh Rao Patankar Baiza Bai had a running feud throughout the twenties, remained firmly committed to the cause of his mother-in-law till the end of her life.

Florentina Sale, the wife of a senior British military official, met Baiza Bai at Agra soon after she was forced to leave Gwalior and remarked, 'sad are her sunken fortunes since we saw her last, when she sat in state on her silver throne with 400 Females in attendance on her [,] now I suppose she has not 20. We found her in a small tent, no fine cloths, or jewels on her or any of her associates in misfortune. We all sat on Horse cloths spread on the ground'.⁵⁸

Baiza Bai had managed to escape with much difficulty. It is quite likely that had she remained in Gwalior an attempt might have been made on her life:

In Gwalior before Mr. Cavendish arrived to take the Bae under his protection she was concealed for some time in a cowshed having escaped by a backdoor from the Palace; in her alarm she even left all her papers behind her, the native custom is to inter specie and put it out at interest and papers describing the spots where the treasure is concealed;

or with whom placed and are all kept in a Tuckea, literally a Pillow which they always place under their heads at night. This being dropt in her haste was found and seized by the Maharajah who thereby knew where to look for the immense sums of money jewels etc. On the [e]x-Queen's arrival at the Residency she had not even a change of clothes and was obliged to borrow 50,000 rupees from Mr. Cavendish for her current expenses.⁵⁹

It should be borne in mind that the resident's role had not been entirely above board in 1833. Cavendish came in for severe criticism even from a section of the British Indian press. The *Agra Moffussil Akhbar* came forward as a ardent champion of the Bai. The Agra newspaper was published by Dr John Henderson, an officer in the company's army. Henderson considered Jankoji as a usurper. 'Our newspapers', lamented Cavendish, 'abuse the Maharaja for setting aside the Bae because he was adopted by Her Highness; they maintain that the Bae was the legitimate sovereign'.⁶⁰ The *Agra Akhbar* launched what Cavendish termed 'libellous attacks' against him for having sided with Jankoji.⁶¹ The resident was sufficiently provoked to demand action against the paper.⁶²

The first few months after the coup saw the short-lived ascendancy of Mani Ram at the durbar. Mani Ram was aligned with Gangadhar Ballal, better known as Dada Khasgiwala. Khasgiwala, as the title indicates, held charge of the household establishment (*khasgi*) and was an important figure in the palace, especially as he had access to the women's apartments. Khasgiwala additionally acted as interpreter at meetings between Baiza Bai and the resident. His father had held the same office before him. Khasgiwala became prime minister soon after the removal of Baiza Bai. Behind the scenes another protagonist was active, the resolutely pro-British Ram Rao Phalke. With Phalke's assistance the British soon had a nominee of their choice in formal in control of the administration, namely, Jankoji's maternal uncle Mama Sahib (Krishan Rao Kadam), whom we have already referred earlier.⁶³ The Mama Sahib was otherwise a minor political figure, but acquired some importance as the company tried to use him to counter the anti-British lobby at the durbar. Kadam's proximity to the British, together with his mediocrity, made him an unpopular figure at the durbar.⁶⁴ Jankoji remained a puppet in the hands of the company till his death in

1843. Mani Ram was imprisoned for a short while, and was released only after he reportedly paid Rs. 68 lakh to Jankoji. This was just a fraction of what he actually owed the Sindia state; 'had the Bysa Bae remained she would have made him pay more than double that sum'.⁶⁵

With growing colonial interference during the late thirties, Khasgiwala emerged as the leader of the faction opposed to the company. The ten years from 1834 to 1843 witnessed the sharpening of contradictions between the pro-company elements at Gwalior, led by Phalke, on the one hand, and Khasgiwala's faction on the other. Khasgiwala could rely on the support of the Maharashtrian Brahmins who dominated the revenue administration—apart from his familiarity with and knowledge of the internal functioning of the palace including the zenana. He skilfully exploited differences within Jankoji's (original) family so as to neutralize the Mama Sahib and finally get rid of him.

For reasons that are not clear, the Mama Sahib and Jankoji's father—Pattoba—were sworn enemies. We have noted earlier that Jankoji had little liking for his father; this might be an understatement since, in fact, he positively abhorred him: 'Next to Baiza Bae he considers Pattobeh his greatest enemy'.⁶⁶ Jankoji had requested the Gwalior resident to ensure that Pattoba did not reside anywhere close to the capital. Pattoba had apparently managed to gather around him several disgruntled elements and at one stage, shortly after the coup against Baiza Bai, a military expedition had to be sent against him since he had been extracting contributions from revenue officials in Malwa.⁶⁷ One might assume that given the possibility of rallying the opponents of the Mama Sahib (actually, Phalke) under the banner of Pattoba, it made sense for Dada Khasgiwala to work towards placing Pattoba nominally at the head of the administration, with Khasgiwala himself as deputy but having *de facto* authority.⁶⁸ Although this move did not succeed, it did undermine the authority of the Mama Sahib.

Following the death of Jankoji in 1843, Khasgiwala spearheaded a violent anti-British reaction. In being part of the conspiracy against the Bai in 1833 his gender bias might have momentarily prevailed over his dislike for the British. But in his fierce resistance to colonial intervention he came

to be perceived by the East India Company as its most implacable foe in the Sindia state. As we shall see in Chapter 4, in 1843 Khasgiwala became the immediate reason for a major military campaign launched by the company against Gwalior.

The question of Baiza Bai's residence remained unresolved for almost 15 years. Although she spent the latter half of this period at Nasik, she did not have any permanent residence. From Gwalior she had proceeded to Dholpur; then to Agra, Mathura and Fatehgarh (Farrukhabad). She would have preferred to stay put at Fatehgarh, but the British government insisted that she should go on to Benares so as to put a greater distance between her and the Gwalior territories. For some time she was at Allahabad, but refused to go to Benares. In 1841 she shifted to Nasik and stayed there for about eight years. All this while she did not give up her claim to be the legitimate ruler of the Sindia state. This illustrates the tenacity with which she worked for her return. She did not 'consider her abdication as binding [...] she said what she did was because her life was in danger'.⁶⁹ She was at work on several projects during this time—building political contacts, planning matrimonial alliances for her family, promoting unrest in Gwalior, and creating favourable conditions for her restoration. For almost a decade after the coup against Baiza Bai the situation in the Sindia state remained unstable, eventually providing an opportunity for the invasion of 1843.

NOTES

1. Cf. R.S. Chaurasia, *History of the Marathas*, Delhi, 2004, p. 18.
2. William Sleeman, 'The Story of Bysa Bae' (unpublished pamphlet), OIOC, p. 1.
3. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 1. Sleeman mentions only two wives of Daulat Rao, namely Rukma Bai and Baiza Bai. Perhaps by the time he wrote his account in the 1840s Durga Bai had been completely forgotten. I have relied on Chaurasia, *History of the Marathas* (p. 44), for the year of Durga Bai's death.
4. Major R. Meade, agent to the governor general, central India, to secretary, Government of India, 8 July 1863, NAI, FDP 'A', 21/August 1863. This is an obituary of Baiza Bai.
5. William Dalrymple, ed., *Begums, Thugs and White Mughals: The Journals of Fanny Parkes*, London, 2002, pp. 253-5. Parkes was eager to show a fine Arab horse belonging to a relative of hers to Baiza Bai, who was generally regarded as an 'excellent judge'. Upon seeing the horse Baiza Bai 'remarked the beauty of the Arab, felt the hollow under his jaw, admired his eye and, desiring one of the ladies to take

- up his foot, examined it and said he had the small, black hard foot of the pure Arab'. Ibid., p. 254.
6. Cooper, *Anglo-Maratha Campaigns*, p. 332.
 7. Meade to Government of India, 8 July 1863, NAI, FDP 'A', 21/August 1863. Arthur Wellesley in a letter addressed to the Gwalior resident at the end of the war wrote: 'The Governor General in his dispatches has decided that Sindia shall be considered guilty of Ghautky's Acts if he retains Ghautky in his service and does not restrain him [,] but the question upon this subject is not whether Sindia has the inclination but whether he has the power of restraining him. ... It is my opinion therefore that he is overawed by Ghautky, that he feels the danger of endeavouring to arrest Ghautky's Person which can alone put a period to his practices...'. 4 March 1805, W. Kirkpatrick Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur F228/79.
 8. Sardesai, *A New History of the Marathas*, Vol. III, p. 322.
 9. Cavendish to W.H. Macnaghten, secretary, Government of India, 14 July 1832, NAI, FD Misc, Vol. 235.
 10. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 16 November 1833, NAI, FDP, 78/5 December 1833.
 11. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 8 June 1832, NAI, FD Misc, Vol. 234, Pt. i.
 12. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 14 July 1832, NAI, FD Misc, Vol. 235.
 13. Dattatreya Balwant Parsnis, *Maharani Baijabaissaheb Shinde*, Bombay, 1937, p. 39.
 14. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 1.
 15. Gwalior resident to Government of India, 12 November 1822, John Adam Papers, OIOC, MSS Eur F109/20.
 16. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 5.
 17. Cf. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 5.
 18. Cf. Cavendish to Government of India, 25 April 1834, 61/19 June 1834.
 19. Baiza Bai to governor general, recd. 2 March 1830, tr., NAI, FDP, 49/16 April 1830.
 20. 'Memorandum of conversation addressed by Her Highness the Baiza Bai to Col. Fielding' (1 February 1830), NAI, FDP, 51/16 April 1830.
 21. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 4.
 22. Fielding to A. Stirling, secretary, Government of India, 18 January 1830, NAI, FDP, 45/16 April 1830.
 23. Ibid.
 24. Fielding to Lord Bentinck, 2 February 1830, NAI, FDP, 47/16 April 1830.
 25. Fielding to Swinton, 8 September 1828, NAI, FDP, 31/20 February 1829.
 26. Fielding to Lord Bentinck, 2 February 1830, NAI, FDP, 47/16 April 1830.
 27. Fielding to Swinton, 8 September 1828, NAI, FDP, 31/20 February 1829.
 28. Dixon Dyke, acting resident, Gwalior, to Government of India, 29 October 1830, NAI, FDP, 21/7 December 1830.
 29. Cf. Amar Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants and the Politics of Opium*, New Delhi, 1998, Chapter 2.
 30. C.T. Metcalfe, vice president in council, to H.T. Prinsep, secretary, Government of India, 27 March 1831, NAI, FDP, 100/27 March 1831.
 31. Dyke to Government of India, 2 November 1830, NAI, FDP, 22/17 December 1830; Fielding to Lord Bentinck, 2 February 1830, NAI, FDP, 47/16 April 1830.

32. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 14 July 1832, NAI, FD Misc., Vol. 235.
33. Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858*, Delhi, 1991, p. 49.
34. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 29 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 42/13 June 1833.
35. Government of India to Gwalior resident, 6 September 1832, NAI, FD Misc., Vol. 235.
36. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 14 July 1832, NAI, FD Misc., Vol. 235.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., Doc. 2.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid. In its response to Cavendish's complaint, the Government of India stated that, 'The Governor-General is by no means disposed to think that in designating you by the word vakeel any disrespect of your authority was intended'. Nevertheless, it conceded that the use of the term 'moolazumut' was 'certainly objectionable', instructing the resident to return any written communication received from the durbar that might require his attendance through the use of such a term. Government of India to Cavendish, 6 September 1832, NAI, FD Misc., Vol. 235.
42. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 24 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 38/13 June 1833.
43. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 23 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 37/13 June 1833.
44. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 24 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 38/13 June 1833.
45. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 9.
46. Ibid., p. 10.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Cavendish to Government of India, 29 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 41/13 June 1833.
50. For example, while reporting on the likely candidates for prime-ministership after the death of Trimbak, the resident commented, 'But whoever may be the new minister ought not to be young or handsome, otherwise the Bae's enemies will raise reports against her, highly injurious to her character and the stability of her Government'. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 23 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 37/13 June 1833. In Cavendish we also have an earlier version of Dalhousie. He was vehemently opposed to the idea of a state being headed by the widow of a deceased king: 'By the Hindoo law the Bae had no more right to rule than our present Queen after our Most Gracious Sovereign'. Cavendish to Government of India, 10 January 1834, NAI, FDP, 33/29 January 1834.
51. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 23 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 37/13 June 1833.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. One such meeting had taken place at the *chhatra* of Daulat Rao on 21 March. Cavendish to Government of India, 24 May 1833, NAI, FDP, 38/13 June 1833.
55. Cavendish to Government of India, 28 June 1833, NAI, FDP, 47/18 July 1833.
56. Cavendish to Government of India, 18 July 1833, NAI, FDP, 36/8 August 1833.
57. Cavendish to Government of India, 12 July 1833, NAI, FDP, 24/8 August 1833.

58. Florentina Sale, 'Notebook of Florentina Sale', OIOC, MSS Eur B360/A, f. 12°-13.
59. Sale, 'Notebook', f. 13-13°.
60. Cavendish to Government of India, 10 January 1834, NAI, FDP, 33/29 January 1834.
61. Ibid.
62. Henderson appears to have been a fine investigative journalist. Much to the embarrassment of Cavendish, in November 1833 he published some correspondence between Jankoji and the British to substantiate his charge that Baiza Bai had been betrayed by the resident. Cavendish to Macnaghten, 28 November 1833, NAI, FDP, 49/19 December 1833. The published correspondence is reproduced in NAI, FDP, 50/19 December 1833.
63. *Kharita* of Gwalior resident, 12 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 276/23 March 1844.
64. Cf. J. Sutherland, Gwalior resident, to R.H. Scott, secretary to lieutenant governor North-Western Province, 8 May 1837, NAI, FDP, 29/5 June 1837.
65. Sleeman, 'Bysa Bae', p. 32.
66. Cavendish to Government of India, 25 April 1834, NAI, FDP, 61/19 June 1834.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Sale, 'Notebook', f. 21°.



Popular Resistance and the 1843 Uprising

THE DEATH OF Jankoji in 1843 was the signal for a major anti-colonial uprising in the Sindia state. Although mainly confined to soldiers of the Sindia army, the insurrection found widespread support among the inhabitants of Gwalior city. The 1843 uprising prefigured the 1857 rebellion at Gwalior—it was, in a sense, a dress rehearsal for the mutiny by *sipahis* of the Gwalior Contingent in 1857. It is pertinent to note that only fourteen years separate the two events. The insurrections of 1843 and 1857 were both intensely anti-British, and as such must be viewed as part of a longer tradition, in north India, of resistance to colonial ascendancy. The strong undercurrent of hostility towards the East India Company, especially since 1818, could occasionally erupt in violent upheavals. These upheavals were not necessarily an urban phenomenon, but could occur in remote rural areas as well. The visibility of this resistance in the Sindia territories, differing from the low-key everyday forms referred to by James Scott in a somewhat different context (the everyday forms were certainly resorted to), is partly explained by the vehement opposition to colonial intervention by a sizeable section of the Sindia ruling class and the potential that this class had, at least in the short run, to thwart the company's designs.¹ The colonial presence was therefore denied the legitimacy that it had acquired elsewhere due to

the acquiescence of indigenous elites. What this meant was that down to 1857–8, i.e. for nearly four decades after the Third Anglo-Maratha War, British political supremacy as enshrined in treaties and various written engagements had a fairly limited acceptability in practice in princely Gwalior.

What is more, popular resistance reinforced, and was reinforced by, the antagonism between indigenous elites and colonial interests. The vocabulary of rebels, both in urban as well as rural areas, was not exactly primitive. It reflects a sense of politics, particularly in articulating resistance specifically against the British as adversaries. A prominent instance of popular resistance that went beyond everyday Brechtian forms of struggle, or even primitive rebellion, occurred in 1831 in one of the most inaccessible parts of the Gwalior state situated in the Malwa region. Additionally, it coincided with the heightened anti-British sentiment of the closing phase of Baiza Bai's regime. Whereas the rebels momentarily threatened Sindia's local administration, the supreme government in distant Calcutta was quite clearly their main target. Not surprisingly, the durbar preferred to leave it to the company's troops stationed in Malwa to deal with the situation. It is for this reason that we can reconstruct the history of the rebellion in some detail from the colonial archive.² The Sindia state did not lack the resources to quell the rebellion, but showed no urgency in doing so. In the wake of the crisis, part of the blame was apportioned to local indigenous authorities who had displayed 'apathy and indifference' in the matter, and 'instead of cooperating in their endeavours to encounter the plunderers, neglected even to give the least information of their movements'.³

A leading role was played in the rebellion by an obscure village official, Lallaji Patel, 'a man of the Aheer Caste', who vowed 'not to leave an English gentleman on this side of Calcutta'.⁴ This movement, which had a millenarian ring to it and which sprang from the situation prevailing in Malwa during the twenties and thirties, also points towards the prevalent phenomenon in the countryside of popular armed resistance to colonial penetration. This reveals much about the pattern of subaltern protest in the region, without an understanding of which it would be difficult to make

sense of the uprising of 1843 or for that matter the vigour of the 1857 Revolt in the Sindia territories.

Lallaji Patel with his base in 'that part of Malwa . . . which is denominated Soondwarah, [and] abounds more than others with subjects of a lawless character and given to predatory habits', was described as a 'disturber who calls himself the miracle performing Raja', and was supposed to have assembled an army of '5000 or more foot and several hundred horse', to 'defeat the English' and 'establish his authority over the whole country'.⁵ Lallaji Patel had been heard telling his followers 'that on the day of the Dusserah [1831] he intends to commence his reign, that the 18 *Jhandas* [standards] he has raised will be sent into various quarters where as many *soubahs* shall be established'.⁶ Although Lallaji Patel perished at the hands of the British just before the Dussehra of 1831 without being able to offer much resistance, the threat he represented appears to have been perceived by the British as very serious.⁷ The Patel's revolt had its epicentre in Sondhwara. This was a loosely defined sub-region of northern Malwa, deriving its name from the presence of the hardy Sondhias settled in this tract. This sub-region broadly includes northern Ujjain and Ratlam; most of Jhalawar; southern Mandsaur; and Shajapur and Rajgarh districts.⁸

In the first week of September 1831 reports began trickling in from the remote Sondhwara Satmahals or Satmahla of Sindia (already referred to earlier in the context of Zalim Singh's colonization of the 'inner frontiers' of northern Malwa), pertaining to the rise of the 'new raja' who had been attracting thousands of ordinary villagers and a large number of petty-chieftains, *zamindars* and village *patels*. The newswriters of various Malwa states stationed in Satmahla were dispatching intelligence about this 'new Raja' (*naya raja*), as Lallaji Patel was referred to. British officials in Sondhwara had been receiving information of a similar nature around the same time. After the Third Anglo-Maratha War the company had regularly maintained an agent in Sondhwara, with headquarters at Mehidpur (district Ujjain), to oversee colonial interests in northern Malwa and keep in touch with the states of Ratlam, Jaora, Pratapgarh, Sailana and Sitamau.⁹ Captain W. Borthwick was the agent when Lallaji's revolt broke out and

had held this position throughout the twenties. The Mehidpur agent had a contingent of troops at his disposal. Borthwick was assisted by Captain B. McMahon, who was eventually entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out military operations against Lallaji. The Sondhias were Lallaji's most steady adherents, but his base was not confined to them alone.¹⁰ He counted a large number of Gujars, Ahirs, Pindaris and Rajputs among his supporters.

It was a little after the 15th of the month that the company's officials were spurred to action. By this time it had become clear that Lallaji was leading a political campaign. This was reflected in his blatantly anti-British statements, as well as in his challenge to the 1818 status quo in the form of appeals to peasants not to pay their dues to the established authorities, appeals which did not go unheeded. Additionally, the revolt had spread to several parts of northern and eastern Malwa, far beyond Satmahla proper. And finally, there were visible signs that the movement had the potential of turning violent.

By the middle of September Lallaji had been able to secure the support of a number of locally influential officials, former state functionaries, zamindars and armed rebels. On 21 September Borthwick received instructions from his superior, Gerald Wellesley, resident with Holkar and the principal British official in Malwa, to employ troops to suppress Lallaji Patel's movement.¹¹ Simultaneously Gwalior asked its Satmahla manager to assist Borthwick with troops. On 27 September Captain McMahon set out from Mehidpur to capture the 'new Raja' and his supporters. Lallaji was killed on 1 October and his troops dispersed. The revolt was thus short-lived but, as we shall see, while it was underway it had the company's officials seriously worried.

Lallaji was a petty village level functionary, the *patel* or headman of village Deoguradiya. Deoguradiya (or Guradiya Deo, *tehsil* Susner) is about 8 km west of Nalkhera in the Satmahla. He was around 40 at the time of the 1831 uprising.¹² It is significant that Lallaji himself was an Ahir, which is indicative of a certain affinity between the Ahirs with their pastoral links, and the Sondhias, the nucleus of Lallaji's movement, who were relative

newcomers to settled agriculture in this region. He had initially come into the limelight as a 'curer of cases of cholera'.¹³

The main thrust of Lallaji's political programme was that he had been divinely ordained to put an end to British hegemony. The moment was at hand when the British would be driven out of Malwa, and indeed from Calcutta as well. Lallaji was to be the instrument for accomplishing this task.¹⁴ The so-called supernatural powers of Lallaji had already been revealed and now these would be directed towards expelling the East India Company from Malwa. It would be futile on the part of the British to resist Lallaji, and if they attempted to fight they would be totally routed. McMahon in his communication to Borthwick on the morrow of Lallaji's tragic end made it a point to comment on 'the belief generally and implicitly entertained that this fanatic possessed supernatural powers and that any force proceeding against him however great would infallibly be annihilated'.¹⁵ The coming Dussehra was the auspicious day set for the beginning of a new era. Lallaji's utterances were unambiguously anti-British. He proclaimed that 'after the Dussera he will not allow a single Englishman to remain even in Calcutta [and] that when he has accomplished this the world will acknowledge him'.¹⁶

Dirks' ethnohistory of the Pudukottai state has highlighted the role of royal emblems in legitimizing the authority of 'little kings'.¹⁷ Lallaji seems to have been in the 'little king' mould, for he claimed to be deputizing for a mythical just ruler, Appa Sahib, who was to reveal himself at, or soon after, the forthcoming Dussehra festival. Lallaji Patel had not ceremonially received royal emblems as gifts from his mythical overlord, but one might suppose that the mythical Appa Sahib had facilitated the acquisition of these emblems.¹⁸

The historical significance of the abortive Sondhwara uprising derives from the extensive popular support and sympathy for the movement. There is no denying that the *patel's* political scheme was far too grandiose to succeed under the given historical circumstances. Yet when his talk, at times bordering on the absurd, is shorn of embellishments, Lallaji emerges as a leader who was addressing real problems. After all it could not have

been without reason that ordinary peasants, estimated variously from three to seven thousand, rallied to his banner.¹⁹ The manner in which people responded to Lallaji's call allows us to view, if only for a brief moment, the dynamics of politics and society at the very lowest level in a remote sub-region of Malwa during the early nineteenth century.

As news about Lallaji penetrated the qasbas and countryside of Sondhwara, ordinary folk, reckoned in thousands by contemporary observers, began undertaking pilgrimages to Deoguradiya. Wellesley was informed that 'crowds are daily flocking to pay their respects to this Nya Rajah'.²⁰ When Khoob Chund, an inhabitant of Sehore, travelled from his residence to Deoguradiya, going via Shujalpur and Sarangpur, he witnessed 'Thousands of men, women and children travelling on the same road'. At Nalkhera he came across 'a very large multitude' of 'about 5 or 6 thousand people'.²¹ At the camp 'the crowd was great and pressing for a sight of the Putel'.²²

Many of those who flocked to Lallaji's camp came in search of remedies for ailments afflicting them or their relatives; others were just satisfied with a sight of the great man. The medical role of Lallaji as healer gradually became secondary and seems to have eventually ceased altogether. Increasingly, the pilgrimage became an expression of loyalty to the cause of Lallaji. Those individuals who could afford it, made token offerings usually in cash. While all the offerings which added to Lallaji's resources were welcome, politically it was the donations made by *kamavisdars*, *zamindars* and village *patels* that were more important. These were an affirmation of faith in the leadership of Lallaji. 'Thousands of rupees come in presents', noted the Agar kamavisdar;²³ and according to the Shajapur *vakil* at Sehore, 'By taking from 5 to 16 Rupees from each village he has accumulated a large sum of money'.²⁴ One estimate was that Lallaji received 'gifts to the value of 1,000 or 1,100 Rupees daily'.²⁵ Pratap Singh, who was part of Lallaji's inner circle, stated at his trial, where he was trying to play down the importance of the entire affair, that 'whilst I was there the daily income was about 500 Rupees, sometimes only 200 Rupees a day and sometimes even 700'.²⁶ The

offerings were described as 'nazars', or tribute with the implied meaning of submitting to a feudal superior. Thus, 'everybody presented nuzurs and went on. Each Putel presented 5 Rupees and a coconut on behalf of his village and poor Putels whatever they could afford'.²⁷ Whole villages had 'subscribed in making contributions to him'.²⁸ Lallaji had enlisted the support of 'sirdars of petty forts', as well as of 'kumavishdars [*sic*] of the neighbourhood, Pundits and Hákims [governors] of Kanur, Nulkhera, Soosnere, Sarangpoor and Agur'.²⁹ Village *patels* and petty *zamindars* were expected to present at least Rs. 5 each; *amils*, *kamavisdars* and other *pargana*-level officials were expected to pay tribute at the rate of Rs. 16. In practice the rate for the latter category might have been between Rs. 10 and Rs. 16.³⁰ Pratap Singh in keeping with his status as the former diwan of Narsinghgarh had presented a palanquin to Lallaji.³¹ At his trial Pratap Singh accepted the charge that he had presented a *palki* to Lallaji, but denied that this had any political meaning. He insisted that the gift was an expression of his gratitude towards Lallaji for having restored his ailing son to health.³²

Some of the donations were used to distribute alms or to give 'each visitor 12 pice weight of flour from which a good meal can be made' or for meeting the costs of the *bandobast* and elaborate ceremonial which was crucial to legitimizing Lallaji's status.³³ However, the major part of the collection was earmarked for the support of armed retainers.

In a communication of 18 September, Risaladar Jalal Khan reported that Lallaji had already bought 60 horses. Babaji Atma Ram, Sindia's newswriter posted at Deoguradiya, placed the number of horses bought recently by the *patel* at 30. Lallaji had paid Rs. 300 each for 25 of these horses. Eventually the tally of the *naya raja*'s personal (*khas*) horsemen was between 55-60. His infantry comprised 100-150 foot. In addition there were the 25 mounted retainers of Pratap Singh; 17-25 sawars of the Sondhia outlaws Puddum and Newul; and 12-15 horses brought by Kalyan Singh, son of the *zamindar* of Sundarsi. Towards the end of the month the strength of Lallaji's cavalry was roughly 150 horse.³⁴ We are not sure whether this

includes the followers of another Sondhia chief, Upjee, son of the thakur of Kalsea, to whom an appeal had been made by Lallaji Patel, but who probably committed himself only at the last moment.

The retainers who entered Lallaji's service with their own horse were paid at the rate of Rs. 13 per month; the trained foot soldiers at the rate of Rs. 3 per month.³⁵ On the eve of the engagement with McMahon, sixty Pindaris (by now a generic term for irregular horsemen, living partly on plunder) from the Bhopal state were reported to have joined Lallaji's forces, as well as 200 Arabs who had come from Gujarat 'disguised as merchants'.³⁶ Commenting on these latecomers to the cause, Borthwick remarked, 'parties join him one day and leave him the next according as their expectations are raised or disappointed'.³⁷

Lallaji's ability to raise funds denotes general acceptance of his claim to leadership. On the whole the contributions seem to have been voluntary, though one cannot rule out the possibility of a certain element of coercion. By the second week of September the authority of Lallaji came to be widely recognized in Sondhwara. He deputed his officials to announce that henceforth dues were to be paid to his regime alone. The Sindia and Holkar revenue arrangements were no longer valid. Contributions were being levied from villages in Satmahla, Zirapur, Machalpur, Agar, Mehidpur, Narsinghgarh and Shajapur. Lallaji had threatened to take immediate possession of Nalkhera which had 'occasioned some uneasiness to the *amil*dar'.³⁸ The *kamavisdars* of Mehidpur and Tarana (in Holkar territory) 'represented that the new Raja had sent injunctions to the different villages not to pay the revenue instalments to the Amils, for Appa Saheb Aleajah would shew himself at the Dusserah and receive the collections';³⁹ 'The Suwars of the new Raja demanded a nuzranah from the zumeendar of Turanah who replied that a contribution had already been sent'.⁴⁰ Lallaji had 'sent men to prevent the payment of revenue in the Mehidpur district'.⁴¹ By the third week of September, a confident Lallaji had even begun encroaching upon revenue administration in the core areas of Sindia territory. News arrived on the 24th that 'the new Raja had sent directions to the Ruyuts of Oujein not to pay rent to the Amil as the Raja would receive it

himself at the time of collecting the revenue instalment'. Lallaji must have been further emboldened upon learning that 'Five horsemen were sent in pursuit of the men who brought these orders but were unsuccessful'.⁴² His growing assertiveness on the question of revenue dues, which he insisted should not be paid to the Sindia and Holkar appointees, soon manifested itself in attempts to terrorize officials by resorting to violence. When Uma Dutt, a revenue official, went to Shajapur to collect dues, accompanied by five horsemen, his path was blocked by '5 or 6 mounted Sondiah robbers'. The Sondhia sawars were 'joined by 5 more robbers and having turned upon Ooma Dutt's party they killed one of his men and wounded all the rest with stones'. Uma Dutt had to beat a hasty retreat and in the process lost three of his horses. These horses were subsequently sighted in the camp of Lallaji.⁴³ The horses of a certain Bhagmull Chowdhree were similarly carried away by force.⁴⁴ L. Wilkinson, the political agent for eastern Malwa, informed the Indore resident that according to his reports 'five horses stolen from the Shahjahanpoor Pergunnah, three of them belonging to Sindiah's Paga [bodyguard], have been recognized among Laljee Putel's Suwars. One of them was carried off after murdering the owner'.⁴⁵

Following this the raja ordered peasants throughout Sondhwara 'not to pay rent to anyone but him'. With the inauguration of Appa Sahib's reign after Dussehra, revenue dues were to be collected at the rate of '3 Rupees a Bigah for opium and one rupee for other produce'.⁴⁶ Significantly, poppy cultivation carried no stigma; the 'common sense' about opium was that land sown with poppy would pay three times more revenue than other crops. Opium poppy was indeed a crop of very high value for the state, and Lallaji intended that it should remain so. This could be seen to represent an internalization by village revenue functionaries of the worth attached by the state to poppy cultivation.

Moreover, cultivators were generally promised 'a remission of 4 Rupees in the Revenue instalment' by Lallaji's peasant-friendly regime.⁴⁷ Whether or not the peasants were convinced of the rebel regime's viability, they immediately spotted the chance they had been offered to hold revenue collectors at bay: 'The Ryuts have refused to pay their arrears and say

they will settle accounts at the Dussehra'.⁴⁸ *Mahajans* and *sahukars* were reported to be in a state of panic. They 'had taken alarm, and declined being security for the cultivators', almost bringing the revenue machinery to a standstill since the role of the bankers and moneylenders was central to realizing revenue dues.⁴⁹

What made Lallaji Patel so formidable was the active involvement of petty warrior chiefs and armed rebels in his movement. The residency at Indore in conveying its assessment of the uprising to the government of India emphasized the cooperation extended to Lallaji by 'Plunderers . . . who formed part of the Band of Insurgents who joined the Late Impostor in Soandwara'.⁵⁰ While many of these 'plunderers' were 'Inhabitants of that District' several came 'from the adjoining province of Meywar, in the Oudeypore territory, where all are sure to find refuge and protection when driven out of Malwa'.⁵¹ In a lengthy comment on the problem which Lallaji Patel had highlighted, the acting 'resident at Indore stated:

It is seldom that Western Malwa in particular has ever been entirely free from the incursions of these Marauders, though it is only since they were congregated in support of the Impostor, that they appear to have become so much troublesome and daring. Scarcely a month had elapsed from the time of putting down that insurrection, when accounts were brought of their infesting the Highways and committing all sorts of outrages and depredations on persons and property. Being in general well-mounted and armed and in considerable bodies they were for the most part enabled to set at defiance the local authorities.⁵²

Lallaji's biggest catch was Pratap Singh Solanki, former diwan of Narsinghgarh. The *naya raja* had appointed Pratap Singh 'the chief administrator of his affairs'. He 'enjoyed the fullest confidence of the Putel, was always at his side consulting and advising him whilst the others who had brought small parties were kept at a distance'.⁵³ Pratap Singh had quietly left the battlefield when his leader fell but was soon captured. He was tried at Sehore, headquarters of the political agent for eastern Malwa, and suffered a brief incarceration. The proceedings of the trial, which is what the British preferred to call these proceedings presuming that they had a right to try a subject of Narsinghgarh who had committed an 'offence'

in Sindia/Holkar territories, provide much useful information about the revolt.

Pratap Singh, about ten years senior to Lallaji, held a *jagir* in Narsinghgarh yielding Rs. 4,000 per annum. He became the premier official of Narsinghgarh c.1826–7 and was dismissed a year later, apparently due to differences with the new ruler of the state, Hanwant Singh, who succeeded Sobhag Singh in 1827. Pratap Singh retained his *jagir* but began facing financial problems. This seems to have prompted him to join Lallaji with armed retainers and a number of Sondhias among whom he had a large following. He was given the rank of commander of 500 horse by Lallaji and allegedly promised the *kamavisdari* of Umatwara.⁵⁴ Wilkinson appraised him as ‘a man of considerable influence in the neighbourhood and great intelligence. The example of such a man as was to be expected did I know serve to mislead many who would otherwise have hesitated before they joined the Putel’s camp’. Moreover ‘the experience which Prutapjee must have acquired as the Nursingurh Raja’s Dewan must have taught him something of the arts of collecting, and organizing men’.⁵⁵ Pratap Singh was thus a key player in Lallaji’s movement.

Lallaji strengthened his position by inviting powerful armed rebels and *zamindars* of Sondhwara to join him. We have the names of some of those who responded favourably: Kalyan Singh, Puddum, Newul, Mawa, Ram Singh and Upjee. While Pratap Singh was captured a few weeks after the ill-fated uprising, Upjee, Puddum, Newul and Mawa remained at large and continued to harass the authorities in Sondhwara.⁵⁶ Though these rebels are frequently described as ‘plunderers’, it is important to note that we are actually dealing with a group which had been finding it difficult to hold on to intermediate rights derived from control over land and positions in village and *pargana*-level revenue administration. After 1818 Sondhwara *zamindars* and village intermediaries did not find it easy to negotiate terms with indigenous rulers. The process of negotiation was an ongoing one in this frontier area where customary rights and dues may not have been as well defined as in other parts of Malwa. The major indigenously ruled states of Malwa had sensed the reluctance of the company to tamper with

the arrangements worked out in 1818. These states had their own points of contestation with the British but did not push the contradictions to breaking point. The powerful Sindia state retained a great deal of real power vis-à-vis the company. It was also aware that as long as it did not threaten to completely undo the terms of 1818, it could rely on limited support from the colonial army to deal with some difficult situations. This allowed the Sindia state to continue undisturbed its long-term policy of keeping in check the ambitions of local élites, petty-chiefs, *zamindars* and village intermediaries. It had 'ever been the [Gwalior] Durbar's fixed policy to depress to the level of mere zemeendars, by gradually denuding them of all save zemeendary rights, the numerous unguaranteed petty chiefs who enjoy any higher rights; and the reduction of these chiefs and their warlike clans used to be a great work of Scindia's army'.⁵⁷

Colonial intervention was a new factor which eventually placed the *zamindars* and *patels* at a distinct disadvantage. In desperate bids to recover lost ground with their small private armies, a number of 'gangs' of banditti had mushroomed in Malwa during the 1820s. In 1826, attention was drawn to two leaders of 'gangs' operating in the region, Daun Singh and Dawu Chund.⁵⁸ About the same time Ajit Singh, a Sondhia leader, was active in parts of Sondhwara with about 400-500 followers.⁵⁹ Ajit had been 'a disturber of the peace in northern parts of Malwa', for nearly a decade and in 1821 had been imprisoned for a year or two by the Kota authorities.⁶⁰ He resumed operations after being released and in 1826 had written to the amildar of Rampura threatening 'to lay waste the country if his unconditional terms are not granted to him'.⁶¹ At this point the company decided to requisition troops from Nimach to check Ajit Singh. Incidentally, the not quite easily subdued Bhils were never far from such a scene. Lt. A. Lloyd was attacked by a party of Bhils in a rather spontaneous manner during the course of the campaign against Ajit Singh.⁶²

In another incident, the result of a dispute which reached its climax in 1821 and was subsequently revived at the time of Lallaji's uprising, the chaudhari of Sironj triggered a minor revolt in the process of attempting to win back some of his former rights. Sironj, at the eastern extremity of

north Malwa, had been a Holkar territory. Yashwant Rao Holkar in turn gave it in *jagir* to his ally Amir Khan. After the Third Anglo-Maratha War Sironj became a part of Amir Khan's newly created principality of Tonk.⁶³ Amir Khan had drastically reduced the rights of the *chaudhari* which in monetary terms had amounted to Rs. 20,000 annually. When an appeal was made to Malcolm he declined to intervene in the matter. The Chaudhari, Bhoj Raj, then despatched an agent of his to various parts of Malwa to raise troops. This agent was able to win over a few disgruntled revenue farmers and intermediaries including Azim Bohra, formerly *ijaradar* of Sindia's Pavagarh Mahals (district Panch Mahals, Gujarat), Kundoo Punt Nana and Niamat Khan Risaladar. The speed with which Bhoj Raj could levy 'a force of about 500 footmen and 60 suwars' is a comment on the state of affairs in north Malwa during the twenties.⁶⁴ A surprise offer of support for Bhoj Raj came from 'a person of European descent who is said to be the son of a Colonel Songster formerly in the service of the Ranah of Gohud but who has assumed the name of Tod and on this occasion described himself as the brother of the Political Agent at Oodepoor [James Tod]'.⁶⁵ At this point the company sent in its troops to prevent the affair from taking a serious turn and brokered an agreement between Amir Khan and Bhoj Raj by which the *chaudhari* was assured of an annual income of a paltry Rs. 600. He never reconciled to this depressed status and contemporary with Lallaji's revolt was making fresh attempts to reassert himself.⁶⁶ We have already referred to Pratap Singh, who when he presented himself in the *darbar* of Lallaji 'explained to the Raja the straits to which he had been reduced'.⁶⁷ Deposing at his trial, Pratap Singh referred to Lallaji's instructions to Sondhia rebels 'that they were not to plunder, or oppress the Ryots in any way', upon which Puddum and Newul remonstrated saying 'we have been robbed of our hereditary places how are we to subsist'.⁶⁸ Kalyan Singh, another notable Lallaji loyalist might have harboured a similar grudge. Kalyan Singh was the son of Bhopal Singh, *zamindar* of Sundarsi. The *zamindar* of Sundarsi had traditionally enjoyed 'large Huks [*haqs*, rights] in that Pergunna' which had steadily been encroached upon due to the peculiar administrative arrangements of the place.⁶⁹ Of the 30 villages belonging to

the Sundarsi revenue unit, 12 were held by Sindia, 11 by Holkar, and 6 by the Dhar Pawars, while the town of Sundarsi was under the joint management of Sindia, Holkar and Pawar. There were also the claims of the *zamindar* dispersed through these villages.⁷⁰ Even at the best of times negotiating terms with the officials of the three Maratha chiefs, whose equations in relation to each other were being constantly redefined at the turn of the century, was no easy task for the *zamindar*. To this imbroglio was added the presence of the company which preferred dues to be defined in fixed and absolute terms, reducing the scope for renegotiation. The plight of the Sundarsi *zamindar* thus illustrates the kind of grievances which found an outlet in Lallaji's movement.

Correspondence on the closing phase of the company's administration in eastern Shujalpur, coinciding with the 1831 rebellion, allows us to view the implications of closing the option of renegotiation of intermediaries' terms.⁷¹ When eastern Shujalpur came under direct British administrative control (1818) colonial officials had argued that with the restoration of peace there would be an increase in production and hence a corresponding increase in land revenue was justified. Wilkinson in his review of the settlement made by the first agent for eastern Malwa, Major Henley, remarked that he 'let the Pergunnah on a 5 years lease, raising the rent from about 70,000 Rupees by an annual increase to about 1,50,000 Rupees. And I see from his early correspondence that he expected it would in the course of a few more years yield 3 Lakhs. The truth in such cases is admitted with the greatest tardiness. He lived to see [Henley died in 1823] but not to remedy the ruinous effects of these unfounded expectations'.⁷² Village *patels* unable to meet the enhanced obligations had been put to great hardship. The cattle and property of defaulting *patels* had been put up for auction and sold 'and many of the defaulters were thrown for a season into the Sehore jail'.⁷³ Though some remissions had been granted by Henley's immediate successor, these did not suffice to alleviate the suffering of the *patels* or other sections of the peasantry. Wilkinson discovered that a large number of *patels* had refused new terms offered to them and 'after a full and patient enquiry it appears that these unfortunate men had ample grounds

of complaint: they could never have been so tyrant ridden by any of the less powerful neighbouring Native Governments without an explosion'.⁷⁴

Lallaji was firm about ensuring that any contradictions between sections of the peasantry and the intermediaries did not alienate the peasants from his cause. He strictly ordered the Sondhwara rebels to desist from committing any robbery or theft, threatening 'them with death if they plunder', but promising 'such as behave well a continuance of service'.⁷⁵ Several months after the uprising had been suppressed, Wilkinson expressed his admiration for the fact that Lallaji 'would urge no oppression [against peasants] to justify his resistance to the established authorities'.⁷⁶

McMahon commenced his march to Deoguradiya before daybreak on 27 September, having been forced by rain to postpone his departure by a day.⁷⁷ Incessant rain slowed down his march towards the *patel's* camp, which he reached on the fourth day. The environs of Deoguradiya were 'jungly and uneven' requiring a great deal of caution in approaching the site of Lallaji's encampment. When McMahon closed in upon the enemy on the morning of 1 October 'a dense body of about 500 Horse and foot suddenly appeared', advancing to attack the company's troops. McMahon's forces retaliated by opening 'fire from the Infantry from which the fanatic leader and many of his adherents fell dead'.⁷⁸ The Indore resident was scarcely able to conceal his sense of relief on hearing of Lallaji's defeat. Wellesley, anxiously awaiting news of the outcome of the battle, hastily scribbled a note addressed to the supreme government, which in his excitement he dated 3 September, instead of 3 October: 'This divine Emperor is not destined to overturn our empire in India—he has bit the dust!'⁷⁹

The main body of Lallaji's followers managed to escape, taking advantage of standing crops in fields around the village. The encounter left three killed and thirteen wounded on the British side.⁸⁰ McMahon's official report does not give figures for casualties among the supporters of Lallaji, but we know that the chief Sondhia rebels did not participate in the actual fighting. On seeing McMahon's contingent they lost no time in calculating the odds against Lallaji and decided to save their troops and resources for another day. Lallaji's supporters might not have anticipated that the British

would send in their troops so soon; they were somewhat confident of being able to fight Sindia's forces, but taking on the company's troops in the open field was a different matter. While narrating the events of the morning of 1 October, Pratap Singh stated that when they saw McMahon's contingent they initially thought 'it was a force sent by Sindiah's *amils* from Kanur, Shahjahanpoor, and Nulkhera'. McMahon's swift advance had indeed taken them by surprise. When the rebels learnt that the contingent was accompanied by field guns 'we then knew they must belong to a British Force, as there were no Guns in any of the above mentioned Thanahs of Sindia'.⁸¹ An aspect of the myth of Appa Sahib had been that he would miraculously appear with an 'Army of Lacks of men', that Lallaji's own troops 'should have no occasion to fight'.⁸²

Ultimately, the resources of Lallaji were too meagre for a sustained military struggle. This was also true for the petty *zamindars* who rallied behind him. Armed combat in the open field against the forces of the East India Company was out of the question. It is possible to conjecture that a popular uprising of a guerrilla type might have lasted out longer. Surely the days of the rebel with 100–150 horses were over except in a very limited sense. Stewart Gordon has suggested in the context of eighteenth-century Mughal Malwa that 'with between 100 and 500 troops a leader might threaten smaller zamindars and Mughal garrisons in rural areas'.⁸³ Contemporary British officials in Malwa were aware that had Lallaji triumphed on 1 October, the Dussehra of 1831 might have turned out very differently. In the course of a communication to the supreme government, Captain T. Robinson, the acting resident at Indore, was still not willing to belittle the significance of Lallaji several months after the uprising had been suppressed:

[I]t may not here be amiss to remark that the least reverse happening to Capt McMahon's party ... would have immediately swelled the Ranks of the Impostor beyond Calculation and set all Malwa in a Flame. That no such reverse did happen must be ascribed solely to the very fortunate occurrence of the fall of the Impostor on the first onset for the disparity of Force on Capt McMahon's part, the poor Materials of which it was composed and on the other Hand, the religious enthusiasm of his opponents all lead to the conclusion that he must inevitably have been defeated had the Impostor survived. It would be hazarding rather too much to trust to the same good fortune a second time.⁸⁴

There were to be two more occurrences, both on a much larger scale than and qualitatively different from Lallaji Patel's revolt, that would bring all the Sindia territories dangerously close to a volcanic eruption that might have 'set all Malwa [and perhaps much of north India] all in a Flame': the uprising of 1843 and the Gwalior mutiny of 1857. Colonial officials such as Robinson, who had observed the progress of the Sondhwara upheaval at close range, were acutely aware of the fragility of the company's position in Malwa generally, and in the Sindia territories specifically. Little cooperation was to be expected from the Gwalior durbar in effectively dealing with grassroots insurgency directed against the British. Further, as we have seen, there was a very strong lobby at the durbar itself which used every possible opportunity to undermine the position of the company. The coup against Baiza Bai momentarily provided some respite, but the collaborationists were unable to completely neutralize their adversaries. This was not just a matter of factional conflicts at the court but also spilled onto the streets of the capital with its huge concentration of now largely idle soldiers. The *sipahis* of the Gwalior army, who had been instrumental in the overthrow of Baiza Bai's regime, could nevertheless not be easily reconciled to a policy of greater colonial intervention. The political vacillation of the leading military commanders was in sharp contrast to the determination of the *sipahis* to resist the company's moves to tilt the balance of power in the state decisively in its favour.



The regency of Baiza, the spontaneous uprisings of the 1820s and 1830s, the events of 1843–4 and the Revolt of 1857–8 represent a continuum. When Jankoji passed away in February 1843, Dada Khasgiwala assumed charge of the government. Jankoji was survived by his thirteen-year-old wife Tara Bai. Tara Bai had adopted a child of about nine from the Sindia clan who was placed on the *masnad* as Jiyaji Rao. This arrangement was sanctioned by the British. Krishan Rao Kadam (Mama Sahib) was recognized as the regent, imparting a semblance of continuity to the regime. It is remarkable

that at a juncture when the situation at the durbar appeared to be outwardly very fluid and unstable, in fact things were fairly stable and the section opposed to the company's intervention actually consolidated its position. Significantly this, as we shall see, is to be attributed to a great extent to the political maturity of the zenana, and the unity of purpose demonstrated by the women in the interior of the palace. Even though Tara Bai was a minor, she was able to assert herself quite effectively (with, of course, the support and guidance of other members of the zenana) and soon the position of the Mama Sahib became untenable.

Kadam survived in his position for barely three months. The demise of his nephew, Jankoji, had left him with no intimate tie that might link him to the inner circle of the new regime. Moreover, he was regarded as a puppet of the company, with no independent standing. Under the circumstances it was not possible even for Ram Rao Phalke to prop him up. It may be recalled that Kadam had a bitter foe in Khasgiwala, who now moved in to eject the Mama Sahib. Khasgiwala together with Tara Bai's father, Jaswant Rao Ghorpade, took over the administration around the middle of 1843.

In order to do away with the company's constant meddling, Khasgiwala made it difficult for the resident to function from Gwalior. The resident, Col. A. Speirs, had to move out of the Sindia domain to Dholpur (lying midway between Agra and Gwalior) in disgust. To add to this, Khasgiwala also began purging potential pro-British elements from the army. As an initial step Indian born soldiers of European descent were targeted by Khasgiwala's supporters in the army. Eighty-eight 'Eurasian' soldiers petitioned a helpless Speirs in June 1843 to the effect that 'bearing as we do the name of Feringhees we have been seized upon yesterday night[,] tied up to the Guns cruelly beaten and turned out, all in a flock like sheep with our single suit of clothes on our bodies and booted out of our houses and lines. This has been done to us by the tyranny of the Dada Khasgeewalla . . .'. They went on to say that 'The usurper and the ruling powers of Gwalior greatly dread our joining the British, therefore we have thus been turned out, and our property and families detained on the lines and our

arrears of pay kept back . . .; we are in momentary dread of our lives, by the hands of the lawless and cruel sepoys'.⁸⁵

The anti-British faction at the court created a dangerous situation for the company. The preponderance which the British had established over the Sindia state after the departure of Baiza Bai was now under serious threat. Khasgiwala was identified as the main enemy and the British demanded his immediate removal from Gwalior. Events gathered momentum between mid-October and mid-December as the company refused to budge from its demand for banishing Dada Khasgiwala. While the durbar was willing to consider his removal from the key positions he held in the administration, exile was a different matter altogether. Tara Bai tried to placate the resident by sending a delegation to Dholpur to deliver a *kharita* or formal letter to him, requesting his return to Gwalior. The delegation included Phalke, who was clearly playing a devious double game. Given the mood at the durbar he was wary of being openly identified with the British. Yet he was acting in concert with the resident, whom he met alone immediately upon arrival at Dholpur. The language of Speirs' report to the supreme government reveals the familiarity between the two:

On the evening of the 6th Instant [October], Ram Rao Phalkea waited upon me, and informed me that he had received a khureeta from the Maharanee to my address, and wished to deliver it the next day in the presence of Bhawunjee Nana, the brother in law of the Khasgeewalla ... I declined receiving that person, as I informed Ram Rao that I knew him to be one of the most troublesome persons in the Lushkur [Gwalior city], and one of those, who had been chiefly instrumental in inciting the Troops to mutiny against their officers, I told him I should be happy to receive the khureeta from himself and any other communication which he might have to make to me, on the part of the Maharanee.⁸⁶

The *kharita* was ceremonially presented to the resident on 9 October: 'He [Phalke] again went over the Maharanee's message, and received from me the same reply'. The resident refused to even consider going back to Gwalior until Khasgiwala had been expelled. Since Phalke was somewhat reluctant to verbally communicate the resident's response to Tara Bai, Speirs decided to convey his reply through a *kharita*, which, after some hesitation, Phalke forwarded to Gwalior 'by an express camel'.⁸⁷

Speirs' *kharita* of 13 October eventually became the immediate cause

for the company to invade of Sindia territories. The resident soon learnt that Khasgiwala had intercepted the *kharita*, and was furious that he had been snubbed in this manner, all the more so as the non-delivery of the letter was a matter of public knowledge: 'My having delivered the khureeta to the vakeel, his having despatched it, to the Dada, and its non-delivery to the Maharanee, are circumstances well known, I understand, in the Lushkur, and have given rise to great cause of remark by the chiefs'.⁸⁸ The governor general too regarded the withholding of the *kharita* as an offence of 'the most criminal character against the State of Gwalior amounting to a supercession of the Maharanee's authority and the transference of all Power in an unlawful manner [by Khasgiwala] to himself'.⁸⁹ Ellenborough immediately sat down to prepare a detailed minute on the Gwalior issue (1 November 1843) in which he spelt out in detail his justification for a military campaign against the Sindia state. The minute will be discussed later.

Meanwhile, at Gwalior itself the supporters and opponents of Khasgiwala were heading for a showdown. The *kharita* affair led the company to insist that Khasgiwala be placed in its custody. This demand created a sharp division at Gwalior that was reflected in one section of the troops supporting Khasgiwala whereas another felt that the crisis might be defused by complying with the British ultimatum. The troops of the Maharaj *campoo* (brigade), who were loyal to the Maratha military old guard led by Bapu Sitole and Sambhaji Angre, and were perhaps being instigated by Phalke, attempted to resolve the issue by seizing Khasgiwala from the palace.⁹⁰ Nevertheless they did not immediately hand over Khasgiwala to the British. On this question they were divided internally and faced the prospect of armed confrontation with fellow *sipahis* of other brigades. The demand by the company for custody of a prisoner of the Sindia state was certainly unprecedented, amounting to a violation of the sovereignty of the state. That this is how the matter was perceived is apparent from the question posed publicly at a durbar, by Tara Bai, to Jafar Ali, the chief munshi of the residency: 'The Maharanee remarked that this was the first instance that the prisoners of the Gwalior state had been demanded by the

British Government'.⁹¹ This point was again stressed when an emissary of Tara Bai paid a private visit to Jafar Ali to apprise him of the views of the durbar:

[According to Tara Bai] the Khasgeewalla was already in confinement, and should receive such punishment as the Governor General and the Resident might think proper and that he should be confined in any part of the Gwalior Territories which they might select, and that he should not be released until they gave their consent; that by this arrangement the wishes of the English Government would be obtained, and the Gwalior Durbar saved from much humiliation [...] ... that hitherto such had been the custom, and that if the Dada Khasgeewalla was sent to Dholpoor, the Durbar would suffer much in the estimation of its own subjects.⁹²

This would explain the unwillingness of the troops to take the immediate and decisive step of surrendering Khasgiwala to the resident. They dithered for nearly a month and a half before agreeing to hand him over. Speirs had not anticipated such a long delay. Upon hearing of Khasgiwala's arrest towards the end of October, he informed the supreme government that he was proceeding to Gwalior to take charge of the Dada.⁹³ By the first week of November he had a better understanding of the situation. Khasgiwala, he realized, enjoyed considerable support, with the 'Troops opposed to the Maharaj Cumpoo' demanding not only the release of Khasgiwala but also that Angre and Phalke, both of whom had taken refuge with the Maharaj *campoo*, be surrendered. Speirs observed that the two parties were evenly matched, 'but the Bae and her advisers, having the command of the State Treasures, gives her party a great advantage'.⁹⁴

Khasgiwala's supporters included prominent Maratha officials, both in the army and within the palace. Tara Bai's father, Ghorpade, 'the only person who could really instruct Her Highness, to whom he could say whatever he liked and even if necessary ... box her ears', was 'devoted' to Khasgiwala.⁹⁵ Even Sitole, the commandant of the Maharaj *campoo*, was not hostile to Khasgiwala to the extent that the resident assumed.⁹⁶ Of the military triumvirate of Filose, Jacob and Alexander, which commanded the best-trained of the contingents, Filose was more or less ineffective by this time; Jacob was a fence-sitter, though tilting towards the pro-British lobby; while Alexander staunchly supported Tara Bai. In his antipathy towards the

company he showed much consistency. It may be recalled that Alexander was the one military commander who had sided firmly with Baiza Bai in 1833. Soon he was to play a vital role in the impending conflict with the colonial army.

Diplomatic relations between Gwalior and the company were on the verge of breaking down by the second week of November. Jafar Ali was directed to wind up the residual establishment of the residency that had continued to function, with a skeleton local staff, after Speirs had shifted to Dholpur.⁹⁷ The stalemate between the two hostile groups at Gwalior was sought to be broken by the pro-Khasgiwala soldiers when on the afternoon of 19 November they opened artillery fire on the positions of the Maharaj *campoo*. The initiative for this attack was taken by Alexander's troops. The massive exchange of fire lasted for several hours and did not cease till the early morning of the next day (20 November). So fierce was the shelling that, in the words of an eyewitness, it seemed 'like the last day [*qayamat*]!' ⁹⁸ It was only when slave-girls were sent out from the zenana at about 4 a.m. on the orders of Tara Bai that the two sides silenced their guns.⁹⁹ This episode dashed whatever hopes the 'moderates' might have had of a peaceful solution to the problem and only served to strengthen the resolve of the company to launch a full-scale military offensive against the Sindia state. Khasgiwala was taken into the company's custody in mid-December, but by then the governor general, accompanied by the colonial army, had already commenced his march from Agra to Gwalior to teach that recalcitrant state a lesson.¹⁰⁰

The political developments following Jankoji's death under-scored the company's precarious hold and demonstrated the ease with which the Gwalior army could enforce its diktat. The Gwalior issue could only be settled by an overwhelming show of force. Even the possibility of annexing the Sindia state was under serious consideration.¹⁰¹ In his minute on the Gwalior question penned in November 1843, the governor general underlined the important aim of maintaining British paramountcy vis-à-vis the princely states by ensuring continued influence at Gwalior. This was to serve as an example to other states. He singled out disbanding the Gwalior

army as the task which required top priority: '... the first in importance is certainly the reduction of the army, for whose benefit alone the Gwalior Government has so long existed and which has been the real ruler of the state'.¹⁰²

Ellenborough proceeded to depict the Sindia state as an artificial entity with its 'many scattered territories in Hindoostan, bound together by no common interest or feeling amongst the people'. These scattered territories had so far survived as a single state only by the coercion of its 'ill paid and ill disciplined Army, which is neither itself national, nor generally commanded by natives of the country'. Such a state had no reason to exist; and that it did, was only due to the presence of the British and their ability to enforce order. He ridiculed the accession of Jiyaji, dismissing his claim, rather any claim on his behalf, to being a sovereign ruler. 'The Maharajah', Ellenborough argued, was 'a boy of poor parentage and altogether uneducated, *not descended from any one of the Family of Scindiah who has possessed sovereign authority, but from a remote ancestor of those by whom sovereignty was acquired*, elected by the zenana and the chiefs of the army for their sole benefit, not for that of the people ...' (emphasis added). Ultimately it was the recognition by the East India Company of this arrangement that gave legitimacy to the Sindia state and its ruler. The ruler derived his authority from the paramount power, existing 'only by our sufferance'. In other words, the Gwalior state really had no independent basis for its being.

Having trivialized the complex arrangements underlying the legitimization of Sindia monarchy as reflected in the relatively smooth processes whereby sovereignty was vested in the person of the (adopted) maharaja, and having questioned the viability of the state, the governor general then laid out his case for military intervention in terms of the political situation in north India that necessitated dismantling of—to use current Americanese—the 'rogue' Gwalior army:

That [this] army of 30,000 men with a very numerous artillery under the direction of a Person [i.e. Khasgiwala] who has obtained and can only retain his post in despite of the British Government is within a few marches of the North Western Provinces, still under ordinary circumstances we might perhaps have waited upon time and have abstained from

the immediate adoption of measures of coercion *But the events which have recently occurred at Lahore* will not permit the resort to a Policy suited only to a state of general tranquility in India. [emphasis added]

The governor general was referring to the instability in Panjab following the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839. It is worth quoting the governor general's line of reasoning at some length:

Within 3 marches of the Sutlej is an army of 70,000 men, confident in its own strength, proud of its various successes against its neighbours desirous of war and of Plunder and under no discipline or control. It may be hoped, it may perhaps be expected, that no hostile act on the part of this army will occur to produce a war upon the Sutlej, but it would be unpardonable were we not to take every possible precaution against such an event, and no precaution appears to be more necessary than that of rendering our rear and our communications secure by the establishment of a friendly Government at Gwalior.

As we shall see later there were other reasons as well, which were not stated in Ellenborough's minute. The subjugation of Gwalior, the biggest opium-producing princely state, was crucial for the long-term interests of British colonialism. Nevertheless, it is pertinent that whereas Panjab had been absorbed by the company by 1849, the Sindia state escaped this fate.



After 1818 the Sindia army had survived but it was no longer engaged in expansion. As we have had occasion to note earlier, Daulat Rao's troops under Jean Baptiste Filose had made several important additions to the Gwalior territories on the eve of the Third Anglo-Maratha War which were subsequently recognized by the British. The freezing of borders after the war considerably diminished the work of the army. More and more troops were almost permanently quartered in Gwalior. W.H. Sleeman, who had replaced Speirs as the resident (with Sir R. Shakespear as his assistant) estimated that there was a 'concentrated mass of forty thousand soldiers at the Capital'. Attempts to reduce the number of troops had always been strongly resisted by the army. Moreover the several corps did not allow 'any vacancies in them to remain unfulfilled'.¹⁰³

Towards the end of November 1843 the company's army was mobilized for an invasion of the Sindia territories under the commander-in-chief Sir Hugh Gough. At Gwalior, the soldiers were adamant that the advance of the colonial army be opposed. An appeal was made to comrades to fight unitedly, irrespective of religious persuasion. The vocabulary of the appeal is not very different from that used a few years later by the rebel *sipahis* of 1857: '... the Mussulmans were bound by an oath on the Koran and Hindoos by an oath by the Ganges to fight and die for their salt. That they had long eaten salt and must now show their fidelity'.¹⁰⁴ The rank and file of the army had taken over the leadership rejecting the cautious approach of most of the military commanders. Sleeman reported from his camp on the left bank of the Chambal that 'the soldiery have no officer of rank with them, and their bearing is not respectful'.¹⁰⁵ The troops comprising the 'rabble army' which was 'without a leader', had refused to disband saying that 'they had rather die in the field than starve in the jungle'.¹⁰⁶

In the days leading up to the final conflict between the Sindia soldiers and the company's army, anyone at Gwalior suspected of being sympathetic to the British was in danger of being lynched. Informers, or alleged informers, were particularly vulnerable. The premises of the defunct residency came under attack, both because it was the most easily identifiable physical symbol of the company's erstwhile presence in Sindia territory as well as due to its well known function as a centre of espionage. It was common knowledge that the indigenous staff of the residency was primarily engaged in gathering intelligence. After the senior indigenous personnel of the residency had shifted to Dholpur, the petty officials of the Persian office—virtually informers or *mukhbirs* (a pejorative term)—were utilized for gathering intelligence about goings-on in the city.¹⁰⁷ While preparations were underway for the military defence of Gwalior, the durbar publicly declared the residency *mir munshi*, *naib munshi*, *akhbar nawis*, and *khabar-dars* to be spies, and hence *personae non gratae*. Orders were issued that they be immediately apprehended, so that intelligence of the state of affairs at Gwalior was not transmitted to the British.¹⁰⁸ One of the first steps taken by Tara Bai, once it became evident that a military

encounter with the British was unavoidable, was to issue instructions that 'every Akhbar writer and intelligencer of the English should be seized and confined'.¹⁰⁹ A cat-and-mouse game ensued between the company's informers and the functionaries of the durbar. While the latter endeavoured to prevent intelligence reaching the British camp, the company's spies ensured—fairly successfully—that the flow of information was not entirely interrupted. Khyratee Lal, the *akhbar nawis*, managed to keep the network operational at great personal risk. 'People are searching for me ...', he stated in a communication to Shakespear on 27 December, 'but I have hitherto escaped but I do not think I shall continue in safety. Amanee Khan (news collector) says, if he can manage it he will send intelligence; I do not know where he is just now'.¹¹⁰ Amanee Khan had by this time fled to the British camp, fearing for his life after he learnt that *sipahis* had been sent to search his house, and on not finding him there had ransacked it.¹¹¹ The residence of the *mir munshi*, Jafar Ali, had also been searched, and when he was not located, his books were destroyed.¹¹²

By now a violent clash was inevitable as the Gwalior soldiers had announced that crossing of the Chambal by the British army would be regarded as a hostile act. The governor general, accompanied by the commander-in-chief, persisted nevertheless. On 29 December 1843 a fiercely fought battle took place at Maharajpur (district Morena, Madhya Pradesh), near Morena town, on the main road from Dholpur to Gwalior. The British force was led by Gough. The Gwalior soldiers put up a very stiff resistance and victory for the British came at the cost of very severe losses, 'infinitely beyond' what the commander-in-chief had calculated upon. The total number of killed and wounded on the British side amounted to 797, including one officer of the rank of major general.¹¹³ On the same date another engagement took place south of Gwalior at Panniar near Antri (district Gwalior), between a British force under Maj. Gen. John Grey and Gwalior troops led by Col. Alexander. More than 200 British troops (European and native) were killed or wounded in this battle 'owing to the strength of the enemy's position and the number of his guns', due to which 'our loss has been severe'.¹¹⁴

General Gough paid rich tribute to the fighting abilities of the Sindia soldiers and the fearlessness they displayed on the battlefield. There was nothing half-hearted, or unprofessional, about the manner in which they conducted themselves. Colonial historiography might have reduced the 1843 uprising to a minor local incident, but contemporary senior colonial officials were fully cognizant of its historical significance. It is not for nothing that the company's triumph was fêted by constructing a grand memorial at Calcutta for the fallen soldiers of the invading army.¹¹⁵ Gough was effusive in his praise for the Gwalior *sipahis* in his formal announcement of the outcome of the operations at Maharajpur. The Maratha position, he remarked,

[w]as peculiarly well chosen, and most obstinately defended; indeed I may safely assert that I never witnessed guns better served, nor a body of infantry apparently more devoted to the protection of their regimental guns, held by the Mahratta corps as objects of worship. ... [I]ndeed I did not do justice to the gallantry of my opponents.¹¹⁶

A first-hand account by a British officer, Capt. William Herries, who participated in the battle provides us with a glimpse of the nature of the fighting. In a letter written to his father immediately after the battle of Maharajpur, Herries wrote:

I write from the ground which we have today won from the Gwalior army, after a bloody and hard fought battle on their part. We have suffered severely in officers, the loss in men is not yet known. Our loss was almost entirely from the enemy's guns which were well secured, and skillfully placed[.] From 9 o'clock till 12 we were under a very heavy fire which robbed the service of many a good officer. ... We were handsomely noticed by the enemy's guns. The ground was such that it was quite impossible for cavalry to act, a tract of the most intricate and impracticable ravines were between us and the enemy's position and filled with matchlocksmen. ... There were several things that struck me very much in the course of the day. I expected to see some marked effect produced after our guns opened, I thought they would immediately silence the enemy's battery, but altho' we had some 30 guns engaged I do not believe that they silenced a single gun or did any material damage among the enemy. This time that the Mahrattas were well covered by the ravines, and only the few men working the guns were exposed at all. On the other hand, their firing was excellent, they got the range to a nicety, and blew up two of our tumbrils in the course of the day. Their artillerymen stood to their guns to the very last and were bayoneted at their posts.¹¹⁷

Herries concluded his letter with the remark that, 'I have no doubt that our very heavy loss of men will excite enquiries in England and that it

will be questioned whether with such a force as ours, a victory might not have been obtained with less sacrifice of life and yet more complete in its results'.¹¹⁸

How very contemptuous the company's army was of the Gwalior soldiers initially is vividly illustrated by Herries' account of a colleague who died due to a wound received on the battlefield. This colleague 'had made rather a parade of coming out on a poney Arab with a cane in his hand, and some days before he said a stick was good enough to beat such fellows with. The night before the action he bet a lottery ticket that not a man would be touched by the enemy's shot'.¹¹⁹ The valiant defence of Sindia territories by Gwalior soldiers ended in defeat—1843 and not 1818 marks the subjugation of Gwalior.

NOTES

1. Cf. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*, Indian edn, Delhi, 1990, p. 29.
2. For a detailed study of the rebellion see, Amar Farooqui, 'Towards Dussehra 1831: The Revolt of Lallaji Patel', *IESHR*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 (1998), pp. 147–77.
3. Capt. W. Borthwick, agent, Mehidpur, to Capt. T. Robinson, acting resident, Indore, 15 February 1832, IL, 193.
4. 'Extracts from Indore Ukhbars', tr., 8 September 1831, IL, 192/ii; NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
5. G. Wellesley, resident, Indore, to Government of India, 28 September 1831, IL, 192/ii; 'Extracts from Oujein Ukhbars', tr., 9 September 1831, IL, 192/ii; Raoji Ganesh, *kamavisdar*, Agar, to Sindia's *vakil* at Indore, received 22 September 1831, IL, 192/ii; Risaladar Jalal Khan to Capt. B. McMahon, 3 September 1831, IL, 192/ii.
6. McMahon to Wellesley, 22 September 1831, IL, 192/ii. With the collapse of Mughal authority, the *suba* referred to what would earlier have been called a *sarkar*; similarly *pargana* corresponded to what was earlier a *mahal*.
7. McMahon to Borthwick, 1 October 1831, IL, 192/ii.
8. According to John Malcolm the tract from Gangdhar (district Jhalawar) to Ujjain; and from the Chambal to Agar (district Shajapur) was designated 'Sondwarra'. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. I, p. 511.
9. Mehidpur was in the Indore state.
10. Cf. Borthwick to Wellesley, 27 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
11. Unlike his counterpart at Gwalior, the Indore resident had very extensive authority. Whereas generally matters pertaining to Sindia territories in Malwa were within the purview of the Gwalior resident, in actuality the Indore resident in his capacity as the

principal colonial official in Malwa dealt with most of these issues. In this the Indore resident was facilitated by the proximity of Indore to Ujjain, the headquarters of the Sindia administration in Malwa *prant*.

12. 'Account of Lalla Putel received from persons who have come from his camp', n.d., NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
13. L. Wilkinson, political agent for eastern Malwa, to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
14. 'Kotah Ukhbars', 3 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; 'Nursingurh Ukhbars', n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; letter to Shajapur wakil at Sehore, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; 'he talks in an extravagant manner of a change of Government', same to same, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii; Report of Ratanji, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
15. McMahon to Borthwick, 1 October 1831, IL, 192/ii.
16. Report of Ratanji, IL, 192/ii.
17. Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, pp. 37ff.; 104-6, 233.
18. Cf. Farooqui, 'Revolt of Lallaji Patel', p. 159. Lallaji had already acquired a *palki* (palanquin), had managed to purchase an elephant, ordered a *chhatra* from Ujjain, and had sent for a *nagara* (large kettledrum).
19. Cf. Jalal Khan to McMahon, 3 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; McMahon to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
20. McMahon to Wellesley, 18 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
21. Deposition of Khoob Chund Bhamin, encl. in Wilkinson to Robinson, 2 December 1831, IL, 192/ii.
22. Ibid.
23. Raoji Ganesh to Sindia's *vakil* at Indore, received 22 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
24. Letter to Shajapur wakil at Sehore, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
25. Letter to Wilkinson, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
26. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
27. Deposition of Khoob Chund, IL, 192/ii.
28. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
29. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
30. Cf. Kamavisdar, Sarangpur, to Dewas authorities, received 26 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
31. Jalal Khan to McMahon, 18 September 1831; 'Purtap Sing has presented him with a Palkee and Bearers', Babaji Atma Ram to Satmahla wakil, 19 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
32. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
33. 'Nursingurh Ukhbars', n.d.; 'Oujein Ukhbars', 26 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
34. Jalal Khan to McMahon, 3 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; Jalal Khan to McMahon, 18 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; Babaji Atmaram to Satmahla *vakil*, received 19 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; McMahon to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831;

- Letter to Wilkinson, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
35. Cf. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
 36. McMahon to Wellesley, 22 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; Borthwick to Wellesley, 26 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831; Borthwick to Wellesley, 27 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
 37. Borthwick to Wellesley, 27 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
 38. Ibid.
 39. 'Indore Ukhbars', 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
 40. 'Indore Ukhbars', 25 September 1831, 65/18 November 1831.
 41. Ibid.
 42. 'Oujein Ukhbars', 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
 43. 'Durkhast presented by Sindiah's Vakeel', n.d., tr. enclosed in Wilkinson to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
 44. Ibid.
 45. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
 46. 'Indore Ukhbars', 25 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831. On differential rates for opium and other crops in Holkar territories see, Amar Farooqui, 'Opium Enterprise and Colonial Intervention in Malwa and Western India, 1800–1824', *IESHR*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (1995), p. 459.
 47. 'Oujein Ukhbars', 12 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
 48. McMahon to Wellesley, 18 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
 49. 'Indore Ukhbars', 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 65/18 November 1831.
 50. Acting resident, Indore, to Government of India, 19 February 1832, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 193.
 51. Ibid.
 52. Ibid.
 53. Wilkinson to Robinson, 18 January 1832, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 193.
 54. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
 55. Wilkinson to Robinson, 18 January 1832, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 193.
 56. Borthwick to Robinson, 15 February 1832, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 193.
 57. 'Report on Gwalior Affairs', S.C. Macpherson, political agent, Gwalior, to R. Hamilton, agent to the governor general for Central India, 13 December 1856, NAI, FD, CIA, Gwalior Residency, File no. 267, pp. 75–6.
 58. George Rigby to Capt. Spears, 6 June 1826, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 191.
 59. E.M. Gordon, Bangur and Kanthal Political Agent's Office, Nimach, to Col. Lumley, commanding the Mewar Field Force, 6 June 1826, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 191.
 60. Wellesley to Swinton, 29 July 1826, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 191.
 61. Gordon to Lumley, 6 June 1826, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 191. Rampura, along with neighbouring Bhanpura, was among the more important Indore territories located in northern Malwa in the Mandsaur region.
 62. Lt. A. Lloyd, 48th Native Infantry, to Capt. W. Pickersgill, 16 June 1826, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 191.
 63. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. II, p. 514; Hamilton, *Gazetteer*, Vol. II, p. 523; *Gwalior*

- Gazetteer*, pp. 123–4; V.V. Thakur, ed., *Holkarshahicha Itihasa*, Vol. I, Indore, 1944, p. 401.
64. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 8 November 1831, IL, 192/ii.
 65. Henley to Ochterlony, 8 June 1821, IL, 192/ii. Col. Sangster, whose son had now assumed the name Tod, had left the Rana of Gohad to join Sindia's elite corps raised by de Boigne. De Boigne had appointed him the superintendent of his arsenal. Cf. Compton, *European Military Adventurers of Hindustan*, p. 31.
 66. Cf. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 8 November 1831, IL, 192/ii.
 67. Report of Ratanji, IL, 192/ii.
 68. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
 69. Wilkinson to Wellesley, 24 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831.
 70. Capt. J.D. Cunningham, political agent, Bhopal, to R.N. Hamilton, resident, Indore, 16 November 1848, NAI, FD, CIA, File no. 135.
 71. Following the third Anglo-Maratha war, the very fertile Shujalpur *pargana* was temporarily divided between the Sindias and the company. Eastern Shujalpur was directly administered by the British. In 1831, the company's officials were working out modalities for the transfer of eastern Shujalpur to Sindia.
 72. Wilkinson to Robinson, 1 December 1831, IL, 192/ii (hereafter, Shujalpur Report).
 73. Ibid.
 74. Ibid.
 75. Letter to Wilkinson, n.d., NAI, FDP, 68/18 November 1831; Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii; Report of Ratanji, IL, 192/ii.
 76. Wilkinson to W.B. Martin, resident, Indore, 3 May 1832, NAI, FDP, CIA, File no. 34.
 77. Borthwick to Wellesley, 27 September 1831, NAI, FDP, 66/18 November 1831.
 78. McMahon to Borthwick, 1 October 1831, IL, 192/ii.
 79. Wellesley to Swinton, 3 September (October) 1831, NAI, FDP, 69/18 November 1831.
 80. McMahon to Borthwick, 1 October 1831, IL, 192/ii.
 81. Deposition of Pratap Singh, IL, 192/ii.
 82. Ibid.
 83. Stewart N. Gordon, 'The Slow Conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire', *MAS*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (1977), p. 35.
 84. Robinson to Prinsep, 19 February 1832, NAI, FD Misc, IL, 193.
 85. From 88 individuals to Col. A. Speirs, resident, Gwalior, 27 June 1843, NAI, FDP, 501/23 March 1844.
 86. Speirs to Government of India, 14 October 1843, 188/23 March 1844. The familiarity was also owing to Phalke's frequent interaction with Speirs in his capacity as the durbar's *vakil* entrusted with the responsibility of communicating with the resident.
 87. Speirs to Government of India, 14 October 1843, 188/23 March 1844. *Kharita* dated 13 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 292/23 March 1844.
 88. Speirs to Government of India, 20 October 1843, 199/23 March 1844.
 89. Government of India to Speirs, 30 October 1843, 200/23 March 1844.
 90. 'In the course of the day of the 29th [October] a party of Sepoys from the Maharaj Cumpoo went down to the Palace, and demanded that the Khasgeewalla should

- be given up to them, which was done, I believe by the Ranee on condition his not being maltreated by the Troops, he was then put into a Palankeen and taken into the Maharaj Cumpoo, where he is kept in confinement'. Speirs to Government of India, 30 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 208/23 March 1843.
91. Speirs to Government of India, 7 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 216/23 March 1843.
 92. 'Abstract Translation of a report made by Moulvee Jaffur Ally Meer Moonshee of the Gwalior Residency', 8 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 263/23 March 1843.
 93. Speirs to Government of India, 30 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 208/23 March 1844.
 94. Speirs to Government of India, 6 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 211/23 March 1844.
 95. 'Report made by Moulvee Jaffur Ally', 8 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 263/23 March 1844.
 96. In a letter addressed to the durbar on the eve of the crucial battle of Maharajpur, Sitole stated that 'the intentions of the English were full of Treachery and that they intended to take the country by force and that it was impossible that any arrangement could be made [with them], and that Her Highness [Tara Bai] ought to prepare for war'. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 26 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 376/23 March 1844.
 97. Speirs to Government of India, 10 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 262/23 March 1844.
 98. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 19 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 286/23 March 1844.
 99. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 20 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 288/23 March 1844.
 100. Memorandum by the governor general, 29 (incorrectly dated 19) December, NAI, FDP, 317/13 March 1844.
 101. There is a voluminous correspondence on the proposed occupation of Gwalior territories in NAI, FDP, Progs. Vol., 23 March 1844, Pts. i-ii.
 102. Ellenborough, 'Minute on the Gwalior Question', 1 November 1843, NAI, FDP, 261/23 March 1844.
 103. Sleeman, agent to the governor general for Bundelkhand, to Government of India, 21 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 220/23 March 1844.
 104. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 26 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 376/23 March 1844.
 105. Sleeman to F. Currie, secretary, Government of India, 24 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 360/23 March 1844.
 106. Letter of Capt. William Robert Herries, 14 December 1843, OIOC, Herries Correspondence, MSS Eur C634.
 107. The indigenous establishment of the residency comprised Munshi Jafar Ali, Munshi Baqar Ali, Munshi Shamsuddin, Baji Rao (Marathi scribe), Khyratee Lal (*akhbar nawis*, newswriter), and Amanee Khan (*khavar-dar*, intelligence-gatherer). There was besides, an English office comprising of C.F. Da Costa as head clerk, two additional clerks, and Khudadad Khan as *daftari*. Munshi Jafar Ali, the head of the Persian office of the residency, drew the highest salary, Rs. 250 p.m., while the *khavar-dar* received the lowest at Rs. 12 p.m. 'List of Establishment attached to the Gwalior Residency', NAI, FDP, 788/23 March 1844.
 108. 'Ukhbar of Gwalior of the 27th [December 1843] by Jumnadas son of Ghasee Ram', NAI, FDP, 413/23 March 1843; Khyratee Lal to Shakespear, 27 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 381/23 March 1844.

109. 'Ukhbar of Gwalior of the 27th [December 1843] by Jumnadas son of Ghasee Ram', NAI, FDP, 413/23 March 1843.
110. Khyratee Lal to Shakespear, 27 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 381/23 March 1844.
111. 'Translation of a statement made by Amanee Khan news collector who arrived from Gwalior at 4 p.m. on the 28th December 1843', NAI, FDP, 383/23 March 1844.
112. 'Translation of a statement made by Amanee Khan news collector who arrived from Gwalior at 4 p.m. on the 28th December 1843', NAI, FDP, 383/23 March 1844. The *naib munshi* and the *akhbar nawis* had, over a period of several months, recruited numerous 'secret newswriters' and couriers to gather information. It would appear that it was some of these newswriters and couriers (Shumsher Khan, *harkara*, and Shew Persaud, 'the secret newswriter' for instance) who kept the company's network in some kind of working order even after the more visible informers had been immobilized. Cf. 'Deposition of Shumsher Khan (Hurkara)' 28 December 1843, 384/23 March 1844.
113. Gen. Sir Hugh Gough, commander-in-chief, East Indies, to governor general, 4 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 408/23 March 1843.
114. Maj. Gen. John Grey, to commander-in-chief, 30 December 1844, NAI, FDP, 408/23 March 1844.
115. The memorial, located on Strand Road, still stands, and used to be known from its shape as 'pepper pot'. Ellenborough had ordered its construction following of the victories at Maharajpur and Panniar: 'A triumphal monument, commemorative of the campaign of Gwalior will be erected at Calcutta and inscribed with the names of all who fell in the two battles...'. General Order by the governor general, 4 January 1844, 407/23 March 1844. That the significance of the military conflict of 1843 had been completely forgotten by the early twentieth century is indicated by the following careless remark by the author of an authorized colonial history of Government House, Calcutta (the text of which is endorsed by the official website of the Governor of West Bengal, <http://rajbhavankolkata.gov.in>): 'As Sir Charles Napier's brilliant Sindh Campaign was fought in the same year [1843] it can only be concluded that Lord Ellenborough [commemorated] *the comparatively insignificant actions of Maharajpur and Punnar* because he himself was present when the former was fought' (emphasis added). N.V.H. Symons, *The Story of Government House*, Alipore, 1935, Chapter V, p. 6, <http://rajbhavankolkata.gov.in/pdf/chapterV.pdf>.
116. Gough to Ellenborough, 4 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 408/23 March 1844. One is reminded here of the astonishment of Arthur Wellesley when he confronted the Sindia army forty years earlier at the battlefield of Assaye.
117. Herries, 29(?) December 1843, Herries Correspondence.
118. Herries, 29(?) December 1843, Herries Correspondence. This is a continuation of the letter, but dated 22 January 1844.
119. Herries, undated letter, Herries Correspondence.



The Aftermath of Maharajpur

ON THE MORROW of its pyrrhic victory the colonial army proceeded towards Gwalior, and on new year's eve Ellenborough received the maharaja at an improvised durbar. While maintaining all outward forms of courtesy (including a twenty-one gun salute), the governor general staged a performance that was intended to publicly demean the king and underline his political impotence—thereby the impotence of the state itself. The little boy was literally crushed under the weight of formal ceremonial in which the rules were laid down by colonial officials with a view to highlighting what they considered to be the farcical nature of indigenous pretensions to royalty. In his detailed account of the maharaja's visit to the governor general's camp, the residency newswriter, Khyratee Lal, recorded the discomfiture of the maharaja:

[T]he Commander-in-Chief came out to welcome the chief and conducted him into the Governor-General's tent. The Governor-General received the Maharajah kindly, and seated him by his side, but unaccustomed to such an assembly the young chief shed tears. The Governor-General soothed [him]¹

The official British account was even less charitable to the maharaja. 'The young Rajah', it reported, 'was much frightened and agitated and wept during the greater part of the visit'.² The situation was partially salvaged by Tara Bai, who was herself a child, but had acquired a maturity much beyond her years. She conducted herself with great dignity:

The Governor-General sat near the litter of the Maharanee ... and Ram Rao Phalke sat on the ground by the litter and explained to the Maharanee what His Lordship said, Col. Sleeman interpreting. The Bae spoke freely and apparently with much self possession.³

The East India Company pressed its advantage, imposing a new treaty on Gwalior (the treaty of 13 January 1844) whereby the state agreed to accept a subsidiary force, something that Daulat Rao Sindia had assiduously avoided. The 'mutinous' contingents were disbanded and Sindia's military strength was drastically reduced. A reorganized Gwalior Contingent, under British officers, was to be paid out of the revenues of districts specified in the treaty.⁴ Ellenborough had initiated consultations with Phalke on the provisions to be included in the treaty several days before the battle of Maharajpur (Phalke was already in the governor general's train). During the course of the discussion, Ellenborough had invoked the terms of the treaty of Burhanpur (February 1804) contained in its sixth article by which Daulat Rao agreed to accept a nominal subsidiary force to be stationed on the frontier of the kingdom. Daulat Rao, however, never made use of this force.⁵ Over the years this article had become more or less a dead letter.⁶ Phalke could scarcely recall the provisions of the treaty: 'He replied that the treaty was among his records, that he knew it, but had not referred to it for many years, and did not recollect with accuracy the engagements it contained'. When Ellenborough specifically mentioned the provisions relating to the subsidiary force, Phalke's immediate reaction was that he did remember that 'the arrangement was agreed to in substitution of one before proposed, viz., that a force of 10,000 Company's troops should be located at some spot within Scindiah's territories, to which Daulat Rao Scindiah objected, saying that it was neither good that the Company's troops should be in his Territory nor his troops in the Company's'.⁷ Eventually it had been agreed that a force 'of not less than six thousand regular infantry, with the usual proportion of artillery ... be stationed *near* the frontier of His Highness' (emphasis added).⁸ As we have noted, Daulat Rao never found it necessary to deploy this force, although he had ceded some territory for its upkeep. Jankoji had allowed the force to be stationed within the Sindia territories.

The provisions of the treaty of Burhanpur were used by Ellenborough as the basis of the new engagement of 1844. The existing Gwalior Contingent, commanded by British officers, was to be substantially enlarged.⁹ The revenues of several districts, amounting to nearly Rs. 20 lakh annually, were earmarked for its maintenance. In addition, the state was allowed to have an army that would 'at no time exceed 9000 men of whom not more than 3000 shall be Infantry with 12 Field Guns, and 200 Gunners with 20 other Guns'.¹⁰

Dirk Kolff has drawn attention to the tradition, which had a long history going back at least to the early sixteenth century, of recruiting Purbias ('easterners') as soldiers in Malwa. The Purbias belonged to the eastern Ganga plains, mainly the region of Awadh and Bhojpur. Kolff attributes the recruitment of Purbia troopers, initially by the Khalji sultanate of Malwa at the beginning of sixteenth century, to their search for new opportunities after the fall of the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur (1480s) where they had earlier found employment in large numbers.¹¹

Iqtidar Alam Khan has recently re-examined the question in his study *Gunpowder and Firearms*. Khan broadly accepts Kolff's view that the sixteenth century witnessed extensive migration of Purbia soldiers to the Malwa region, but does not entirely agree with the reason put forward by him to explain this phenomenon. Khan's thesis is that Purbia recruitment in Malwa was not related so much to the eclipse of Sharqi rule, and the shrinking demand for Hindustani professional soldiers under their successors, the Lodis, as to the Purbias' 'expertise in firearms'.¹² Purbias had emerged as specialists in the use of firearms, perhaps even before the Lodis ousted the Sharqi dynasty. Khan links the acquisition of this skill to the ease with which saltpetre could be procured in the Bhojpur region. The availability of saltpetre 'presumably enabled warrior groups there to acquire expertise in making and handling of gunpowder at an early stage'.¹³ Rulers in Malwa were keen to enlist Purbias for the expertise they possessed in order to update their military technology. Khan accepts Kolff's argument that Purbia soldiers were initially recruited through Rajput chiefs of the Doab area.¹⁴

With time Purbias emerged as a community of specialist musketeers in the context of the Malwa armies. This pattern of recruitment continued into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Purbias constituted the core of the modernized infantry contingents of the Sindia state and demonstrated their continued effectiveness during the Anglo-Maratha wars. After 1818 the Purbias remained a well-knit and still fairly disciplined group, lending strength and cohesiveness to the Sindia infantry. Their community ties ensured that whenever there was a vacancy it was immediately filled from amongst the Purbia clans. We have already referred to Sleeman's remark that the Sindia army did not permit any vacant position to remain unoccupied for long. What is more, as a group these soldiers were hostile to the British, a legacy of the prolonged struggle between the Marathas and the East India Company in which they had played such a crucial role.

As the process of disbanding the Sindia army got underway, the company's officials were particularly eager to get rid of the Purbias. Sleeman, who was entrusted with this task, in a report on the disbanded troops stated: 'None of them join the yeomanry of the country...as almost all were from our districts in the Doab, or from Oude...'.¹⁵ In another letter he added that the people in villages and towns outside Gwalior had no sympathy for the infantry battalions as 'not a man among them was ever enlisted from the peasantry of the country'.¹⁶ This might perhaps explain to some extent the inability of the Gwalior army to mobilize more widespread resistance to the company's military onslaught in 1843. The role of these discharged soldiers in contributing to the discontent among the Awadh *sipahis* who participated in the Revolt of 1857 remains unexplored.

In his discussion on the identity of the Purbia warriors in Malwa, Khan distinguishes between the Purbia clans settled in Malwa and Gujarat from the sixteenth century onwards, from which soldiers were recruited by various armies in the region (including the Bombay Army of the East India Company in the eighteenth century), and the 'Baksariyas' who were recruited directly from the Bhojpur region. The label 'Purbia' when applied to soldiers in armies of Malwa and western India, he suggests,

refers to Purbias of warrior clans settled in Malwa and Gujarat.¹⁷ However, in the case of the infantry units of the Sindia army we can be sure that the bulk of the *sipahis* were Purbias and were recruited from the Awadh-Doab region, whence they returned after the army was reorganized in 1844. Colonial officials are unambiguous on this point. Moreover, Purbias from the eastern Ganga region were not completely excluded. They continued to be recruited in large numbers after 1844 in the abridged version of the Sindia army.

As a symbolic gesture of their political supremacy, as well as for military-strategic reasons, the British established a permanent presence in the Sindia capital from 1844 onwards by occupying the prestigious Gwalior Fort. The Fort was given up with considerable reluctance, causing 'great pain to the chiefs, and all in the Durbar'.¹⁸ After all, possession of the massive Fort, with all its historical associations, was emblematic of Sindia sovereignty. At one stroke the Gwalior durbar was divested of any claim to military potency. The Fort remained under British military occupation till 1886, except for a brief period in 1857–8 when it came under the control of rebels during the Great Revolt.¹⁹

Simultaneously, a council of regency, packed exclusively with the company's nominees, and presided over by the veteran British loyalist, Phalke, had been constituted to administer the Gwalior state.²⁰ The council was to function under the overall supervision of the resident. Governing the state, particularly the Sindia capital, was initially not very easy for the puppet council. The intensity of hatred for the British among the common people of Gwalior was demonstrated in the spontaneous storming of the residency when news of the defeat of the Sindia army reached the capital. A large crowd entered the residency compound, 'set fire to the trees and destroyed the garden', and made sure that no one was left in any doubt about the object of its wrath by pulling down the British flag on the residency building and making 'water on it'.²¹

At the beginning of 1844, popular sentiment at Gwalior still oscillated between demoralization and a desire to put up another fight. On the one hand, there were reports that 'the people of Gwalior, and of the Lushkur

were running away through fright, and because they thought the British troops were bent on plundering the town', and on the other that the rebel *sipahis* 'have not lost their self conceit, and inclination to fight'; 'The common report is that there will be another disturbance and more confusion'.²² For her part Tara Bai, who had barely recovered from the humiliation of the governor general's durbar, summoned Col. Jacob and gave him a piece of her mind:

She told him that in the fight he had done no service whatever. That in lieu of powder he had put Bajira [millet seeds] in his Tumbrils, and in lieu of iron balls had put hemp to send with his battalions; ... That he had cut off the nose of the state.²³

The common inhabitants of the city shared Tara Bai's perception that the military leaders had given up too easily. It was hoped that another confrontation might yet take place. There was much frustration over the failure of any leader to rise to the occasion. The sentiments of the ordinary folk come out vividly in a narrative we have of a strange competition organized by the children of Gwalior.²⁴ In the last week of February nearly 3,000 to 4,000 boys in the age group of 10–12 years got together on the outskirts of Gwalior and formed themselves into two groups. One group was supposed to be the British army while the other represented the Sindia army. The play-acting was quite elaborate. While one boy was selected to play the part of the governor general, others represented various Sindia commanders and the rest were styled common soldiers. The boys then engaged in a fierce 'sham fight' in which several were wounded. The Sindia team was defeated, although 'His Lordship' was 'slain', and 'Phalke' was made 'prisoner' and 'received a severe drubbing from shoes'. When the teams were being constituted it was announced 'that whoever did not join either of the parties were to be considered traitors and to be treated with the same contempt that Col. Jacob's soldiers are'.²⁵ The competition was resumed the next day. The number of participants went up to nearly 5,000. The political statement that the children happened to make in their innocence found an overwhelming response among the 'thousands of citizens [who] flocked out of Gwalior to see the fun'.²⁶ The boys obviously repeated the everyday talk of the town. The Gwalior authorities were

alarmed at the potential for popular mobilization that this diversion had. The boys were asked to desist from the 'sham fight' on the second day and were even offered Rs. 300 if they complied. The extent to which the durbar had lost its legitimacy to rule is evident from the assertion of the 'combatants' to the effect 'that His Highness the Maharaja, [and] the Tara Bae, were supreme in their own households, but could not interfere with them, and that they intended to act as they pleased'. On the third day the assembly was forcibly dispersed and prohibitory orders, issued by the durbar, were promulgated throughout the city.²⁷

This somewhat unusual pastime perhaps continued on a smaller scale in the streets and bylanes inhabited by the dispossessed classes of Gwalior. Here we have children from among the urban poor, with little to keep them occupied, giving vent to the desperation of their families who faced imminent economic ruin due to the dismissal of several thousand soldiers. When Sleeman inquired into the affair of the sham fight he found that the boys 'were the sons of Fukeers, shopkeepers, and all the lower orders of the people of the city'.²⁸ The spectators too must have been drawn from these sections. Sleeman was aware of the seething discontent at Gwalior:

Since the Artillery and Infantry Battalions have been disbanded, great numbers of the people of the city who provided them with food and clothing have, of course suffered in circumstances, from the diminished demand for their goods, and diminished charities to the poor, and all who so suffer, naturally regret the change that has taken place ... at present they have manifested themselves only in this little affray between the boys.²⁹

He had previously recommended the formation of a regular police force to maintain order in the city.³⁰ Thousands of idle persons with no fruitful employment could easily coalesce into a dangerous mob. Food was dear in the city. The arrogant, and often unruly, behaviour of the company's soldiers added to the tension.³¹ There were stray incidents of assault on junior English officers. One such incident occurred on 26 February when a local resident attacked Ensign Thomson of the 2nd Grenadiers, with a dagger as the column led by Thomson was marching through the old town. It turned out that the assailant had been employed in the local administration and had recently lost his job due to a minor altercation with

the company's soldiers. His arrears of pay had been withheld, driving him 'to the desperate resolution of revenging himself on some of the parties through whose complaint he had lost his services'.³²

This kind of desperation was partly the outcome of the realization by the people that the Sindia durbar—even the hardcore anti-British lobby—had abandoned the path of resistance as the price of preventing the outright annexation of the state following the debacle of 29 December 1843. Evidently, truncated authority was preferable to no authority whatsoever. The full implications of this compromise, and the divergence in the attitudes of the people and the Sindia elite were to be revealed fifteen years later during the Great Revolt. Already, in early February, within a few weeks of Maharajpur, an impression of normality was sought to be conveyed by the durbar when a grand reception was held on the occasion of the marriage of Jiyaji Rao. The company's resident was invited to this reception, and, sensing the vulnerability of the Sindia ruling class at this moment, he chose to make a political point whereby the change in the balance of forces was made publicly visible. Sleeman insisted on altering court etiquette that required the resident to sit on carpets on the ground without shoes or boots. This was a protocol requirement that was much resented, but had earlier been complied with nevertheless.

By the mid-nineteenth century, as Sabyasachi Bhattacharya has pointed out, British officials were kicking up a fuss about the indigenous custom of removing shoes, refusing to accept this practice, and had successfully appropriated and inverted it for asserting white superiority by demanding that 'natives'—at least those who were not part of the indigenous elite—unshoe themselves in the presence of the British.³³ It was almost with childish glee that Sleeman informed the supreme government that 'we all sat on chairs with our boots on'.³⁴ However, he was not sure whether the revised court etiquette would be generally acceptable on occasions when the resident was not present. Sleeman made a pointed reference to the indignities that the Gwalior resident had hitherto been subjected to in having to unshoe himself while Eurasian officials such as Col. Baptiste could approach the maharaja in the durbar with their boots on.

In this hour of adversity the Gwalior durbar still maintained some of its dignity as is evident from Sleeman's regret that 'the troops were not allowed to present arms to the Resident'.³⁵ The Sindia durbar with its rich inheritance of Mughal-Maratha court traditions was adept at diplomatic gestures that could be subtly suggestive of slight. It is to Sleeman's credit, his understanding of the meanings of indigenous cultural practices, that he recognized the 'humiliations of a Native court' in withholding the more substantial gesture while conceding the lesser. If the contest on the battlefield was over, the ideological war was still on.



Baiza Bai kept a close watch on developments in her dominion. She maintained a low profile during the 1843 uprising and waited for the upheaval to subside before making her next move. With British influence supreme at the durbar and Phalke at the head of the administration the situation was not outwardly favourable to the Bai. Yet there had been an important transformation. The company had effectively deprived the functionaries of the government of all real authority. These functionaries were no longer a factor to be reckoned with. Nor were the erstwhile military commanders. Baiza only had to deal with the resident now. Over the years she had made her peace with the British and for quite some time had scrupulously avoided direct interference in Sindia affairs, though for the record she did not give up her right to rule. As for the British, now that they had broken the back of the military opposition they did not visualize Baiza Bai as a potential source of trouble. On the contrary by the mid-forties there was already a nostalgic longing for the days of Baiza Bai. In a candid moment, R. Shakespear, resident at Gwalior, appraised her as a ruler of 'great ability' and was in no doubt 'that Scindhia's dominions were better governed by her than by any of the other members of the house'. Among the common people her name was 'still remembered with respect, as a Ruler who afforded protection to the weak against the extortion of their superiors'.³⁶

In 1845 Baiza Bai came up with a proposal that was a masterstroke of her diplomatic genius. Though she never again had the absolute power she enjoyed between 1827 and 1833, she did achieve partial restoration of her status. The Bai was indeed a great survivor. She despatched a deputation to Gwalior with an offer that was not easy to ignore. She suggested a matrimonial arrangement between Jiyaji and her great granddaughter, Chimna Raje. In return she was to formally nominate Jiyaji as the heir to her immense fortune, which reportedly amounted to several crores of rupees. An important precondition was that she should be allowed to reside in Sindia territory.

Of the children Baiza Bai had borne Daulat Rao, only two daughters—Jiji Bai and Chimna Bai—had survived. Chimna Bai, as we have noted earlier, died in 1833 and left behind no offspring. Jiji Bai had three daughters: Bisia Raje, Sukhia Bai and Gujia Raje. Politically designed matrimonial alliances had been part of Baiza Bai's strategy to extend the sphere of her influence. Bisia Raje had been married to Jankoji, but died of smallpox in 1829; Sukhia Bai was married to the raja of Dhar and was widowed at a very tender age. Gujia Raje accompanied her grandmother after 1833. Chimna Raje was Gujia Raje's daughter. She was about seven years old in 1845.³⁷ The maharaja was barely five years older. For reasons beyond her control earlier alliances were not particularly advantageous to Baiza Bai, but the marriage of Jiyaji and Chimna Raje turned out to be fruitful for the bride's maternal great grandmother.

The overture by the former regent created a sensation at the court. Such was the fear that Baiza still inspired that the regency council dreaded 'the worst' if she was allowed to return to Gwalior.³⁸ Baiza Bai had chosen her emissary with great care. He managed to convince the company's officials that his employer was not up to any mischief and all that she desired in the evening of her life was reconciliation with the Sindia family. The emissary, Bapu Joshi, was a Bombay businessman who had come in contact with the Bai in the course of her business dealings. Bapu Joshi had been a shipowner, but with the decline of the indigenous shipbuilding industry at Bombay he had shifted to Nasik.³⁹ Baiza Bai's banking enterprise had continued to

flourish while she was in exile and it is likely that her financial dealings extended to Bombay during her Nasik sojourn. Sleeman was so impressed with Bapu Joshi that after his first meeting with him he noted, 'One of the best proofs Her Highness could give of her sincerity has been her selection of the agent on the present occasion, Bapoo Jotsee [*sic*] a merchant and a man of business from Bombay who will be likely to waste no time in useless discussions and ceremonies'.⁴⁰ Bapu Joshi's visit was followed by a return delegation to Nasik. Negotiations continued for more than two years. Access to Baiza's treasure after her death was too much of a temptation for the members of the regency. The Bai had the last laugh: she lived for another fifteen years. Phalke passed away shortly after the wedding.

The marriage was primarily a political arrangement. Baiza Bai struck a hard bargain. According to the provisions of the agreement that was drawn up, Baiza signed a will making Jiyaji heir to all her property. Against this she was able to extract a major political concession. Ujjain *pargana* (city included) was once again placed under her charge. This gave her a formal status in the government. Throughout her exile Baiza Bai had received a pension of Rs. 4,00,000 per annum from the Sindia state and another Rs. 2,00,000 per annum from the British government. This was to continue, though a portion of the pension was adjusted against the Ujjain revenues.⁴¹ The marriage ceremony provided Baiza Bai with an opportunity to visit Gwalior after a prolonged absence. By sheer coincidence she was also presented with a new political prospect. Ram Rao Phalke died a few days after the marriage had taken place. Baiza had not yet departed from the capital. She now tried to extend her stay so that she could explore the chances of regaining her former influence. Even at the age of 64 she was unwilling to let such a stroke of luck to slip by. Her attempted intrigue failed and she returned to Ujjain.

While 1833 had been a tragedy, 1848 was a farce. The British hardly took a serious view of her moves dismissing them as 'foolish and awkward'.⁴² Baiza Bai's presence did, nevertheless, cause some unease. She could, it was feared, become the rallying point for anti-British forces. She was, therefore, asked to leave Gwalior immediately. The precaution was all the

more necessary since the company continued to be an object of hate at Gwalior. This comes out sharply in the popular perception of Phalke as a toady. In a memorandum eulogizing the 'services' of Phalke, which served as an official obituary, Shakespear observed:

The deceased had incurred the greatest odium in the Lushkur by having remained with the British camp during the battle [of 1843], and by having brought about the peaceable occupation of the Fort and the disbandment of the army and this feeling was so strong against him that several conspiracies were entered upon in all of which the chief object was to destroy the deceased as being a creature of the British Government. The deceased had a most wonderful escape from one of these attempts.⁴³

The 1843 campaign, it should be emphasized, was not just a matter of checking the turbulent armed contingents of one of the Malwa states. In a broader sense it was aimed at taking the unfinished colonial agenda of 1818 to its logical conclusion. Dismantling the Sindia army and rendering it ineffective was vital in order to curb the relative independence that the Sindia ruling class continued to enjoy even after 1818. This independence consequently provided space to the fairly confident indigenous business class of Malwa, with its links extending to Rajasthan, Gujarat, Sind and Bombay. The opium produce of Malwa was the main commodity in the network of commercial and financial relations that encompassed the region. Needless to say, opium was a commodity that was vital to British colonial interests for most of the nineteenth century.

The Sindia state held the key to control over this network as it was the single largest free producer of the drug in India. Besides, its powerful presence and its defiance of the company's opium policies made the complete subjugation of the state, with annexation as a real possibility, the precondition for containment of the Malwa opium enterprise. The urgency of the 1843 campaign should be viewed in this context. The military offensive against Gwalior can be seen as part of a larger strategy that extended from China to Sind. The dates are significant and the events are no coincidence: First Opium War (1839–42), annexation of Sind (1843) and Ellenborough's Gwalior campaign (1843). We need to look at the place of opium in the Sindia economy in order to be able to appreciate the connection between these events. Chapter 6 explores the role of the

opium produce of the Sindia state in shaping the conflict between princely Gwalior and the company's regime.

NOTES

1. Khyratee Lal, 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 31 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 394/23 March 1844.
2. 'Notes of a Conference which took place in the Governor-General's camp ...', 31 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 389/23 March 1844.
3. Ibid.
4. *Gwalior State Gazetteer*, pp. 38–9.
5. Cf. Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, pp. 221–2.
6. Cf. H.H. Dodwell, ed., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1929, p. 580.
7. 'Notes of a Conference between the Governor General and Ram Rao Phalkeeah', 19 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 330/23 March 1844.
8. Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, p. 221.
9. The reformed contingent was to consist of five batteries of artillery, two regiments of cavalry, and seven regiments of infantry.
10. Treaty between the British Government and the Gwalior State, 13 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 433/23 March 1844.
11. Kolff, *Naikar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 87–9, 160–3.
12. Iqtidar Alam Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms: Warfare in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2004, p. 221.
13. Ibid., p. 221.
14. Kolff, *Naikar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 88–9; Khan, *Gunpowder*, pp. 221–2.
15. Sleeman, 11 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 568/23 March 1844.
16. Sleeman, 28 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 678/23 March 1844.
17. For a detailed discussion on this question, see Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Re-examining the Origin and Group Identity of the So-Called Purbias, 1500 1800', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Calicut Session, 1999, pp. 363–71.
18. Intelligence from Khyratee Lal, 3 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 412/23 March 1844.
19. Lee-Warner observes that the 'rendition by Lord Dufferin in 1886 of the Fort of Gwalior, stormed on the 3rd of August 1780 by Captain Popham, in the first Maratha war, and thereafter the subject of many negotiations and engagements, symbolized the fact that the "key of Hindustan" as the scarpd rock was called, rested no longer in military positions held by the Company, but in the confidence inspired by the union of the Native princes with their paramount protector'. Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India*, p. 159.
20. Speirs had recommended Phalke's name for this position several weeks before the invasion commenced: '...he would make by far the most efficient member of a Council of Regency, but I would recommend that the entire management of the affairs of the State of Gwalior should be entrusted to him'. Speirs to Government of India, 6 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 296/23 March 1844.

21. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 31 December 1843, NAI, FDP, 393/23 March 1844.
22. Intelligence from Khyratee Lal, 3 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 412/23 March 1844; 415/23 March 1844.
23. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bar', 4 January 1843, NAI, FDP, 411/23 March 1844.
24. The account that follows is based on local *akhbars* (newsreports) filed for the information of the company. 'Gwalior Ak[h]bars' dated 24–6 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 679/23 March 1844.
25. NAI, FDP, 679/23 March 1844.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Sleeman to Currie, 28 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 687/23 March 1844.
29. Ibid.
30. Sleeman to Ellenborough, 19 January 1844, NAI, FDP, 446/23 March 1844. Sleeman felt handicapped by the absence of a regular police force for dealing with petty offences, especially since the infantry battalions were being disbanded: 'There never has been any Police in the Gwalior State. The power of the chief to secure the rights and enforce the duties of his subjects and servants has always depended upon his infantry battalions'.
31. Officers of the company's garrison were instructed to forbid their soldiers 'from ill using or even mixing with the Town's people, more especially during the present Mohorum season'. Letter no. 70, 28 January 1844, Letterbook of Lt. General Sir John Littler, OIOC, MSS Eur C32. The 10th of Muharram in 1844 (AH 1260) fell on 31 January. Littler was then commanding a division at Gwalior.
32. Letter of Littler, 26 February 1844, no. 190, Letterbook of Littler.
33. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 'The Colonial State: Theory and Practice', General President's address, Indian History Congress, 65th Session, 2004, pp. 22-3.
34. Sleeman to Government of India, 12 February 1844, NAI, FDP, 23 March 1844.
35. Ibid.
36. Shakespear to Sleeman, 12 March 1848, NAI, FDP, 114/7 April 1848.
37. Cf. Sleeman to Shakespear, 8 May 1845, NAI, FDP, 67/6 June 1845.
38. Shakespear to Sleeman, 16 May 1845, NAI, FDP, 68/6 June 1845.
39. Shakespear to Sleeman, 12 March 1845, NAI, FDP, 63/6 June 1845.
40. Sleeman to Shakespear, 8 May 1845, NAI, FDP, 67/6 June 1845.
41. 'Agreement between the Baiza Bae and the Gwalior Durbar', tr., NAI, FDP, 121/7 April 1848.
42. Sleeman to Government of India, 23 March 1848, NAI, FDP, 113/7 April 1848.
43. Shakespear to Sleeman, 16 March 1848, NAI, FDP, 105/7 April 1848.



Opium and the Colonial Economy of Malwa

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY, as we have seen, launched a major military offensive against princely Gwalior in 1843 in order to establish its supremacy over the state in a more comprehensive manner than had been possible in 1818, or in 1833. This was at once a strategy for the complete subjugation of Malwa. Effective political and military control over the Sindia state, the leading indigenous state north of the Narmada and south of the Chambal, was the key to colonial domination over Malwa. While the region continued to be under 'indirect' rule, its economy was fully subordinated to British colonial interests by the mid-nineteenth century. It is vital to keep in mind that Malwa was not just any other area: it was central to the economic interests of the British empire as it was one of the two principal opium producing zones in the Indian subcontinent. The company's control over the opium produce of Malwa remained elusive in the early decades of the nineteenth century precisely because of incomplete control over Malwa in general and the Sindia state in particular. This situation effectively prevented the company from entirely monopolizing Indian opium. Indian opium in turn was indispensable for the survival of the empire.

It is generally recognized that opium was vital for sustaining the British empire throughout the nineteenth century. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, and most of the nineteenth, Indian opium remained essential for promoting British imperial interests in Asia. In the words of a leading authority on the history of narcotics in the colonial era, throughout this period Britain was the 'world's largest organized supplier of narcotics'.¹ Consequently, British India became the exclusive supplier of opium to East and South-East Asia, particularly China. The average annual opium revenue of the British Indian government for the 50 years from 1789–90 to 1838–9 was six per cent of total revenues; the average for the next half-century from 1839–40 to 1888–9 works out to fifteen per cent.² This should be regarded only as a fraction of the wealth which opium generated for British imperialism. Opium in fact served three purposes: it was a major source of revenue for the colonial state in India; it paid for Chinese goods, principally tea, imported into Britain; and the commercial and financial operations connected with it provided avenues for remitting colonial plunder to the metropolis.

Two varieties of Indian opium were marketed in China: Bengal opium (under the 'brand' names Benares opium and Patna opium, indicating their respective areas of production) and Malwa opium (the opium produce of, obviously, Malwa). Whereas Bengal opium was a monopoly of the company, and had been so since the end of the eighteenth century, Malwa opium was essentially non-company opium. For nearly half a century, from c.1790 to the First Opium War in China, Malwa opium exports to East Asia increased steadily. Throughout this period the company endeavoured to bring Malwa opium under its control, but failed to do so. This failure was mainly the result of large-scale smuggling of Malwa opium in the early nineteenth century. The glut that this massive narcotrafficking venture created in the international market was one of the underlying causes of the First Opium War.

The Malwa opium export trade was already well established by c.1800, just around the time that the company had put in place elaborate arrangements to secure its Bengal opium monopoly. It was only in 1803 that the governor

general first learnt of the serious threat being posed to its Bengal monopoly by exports from India's west coast.³ The company's officials in Bombay were immediately instructed to ensure that the trade was extinguished. This was a goal that the company was unable to attain. On the contrary, the trade in Malwa opium continued to expand. The company was then forced to give up its objective of having a market exclusively for Bengal opium. Instead, it attempted to establish a monopoly over Malwa opium as well, by trying to procure the entire produce of the region and auctioning it on the pattern of Bengal opium.⁴ Malwa opium auctions commenced in 1821 and were held at Bombay (later, for a few years, simultaneously at Bombay and Calcutta). The auctions were discontinued after 1830 since the company was unable to emerge as the sole supplier of the Malwa drug. From 1831 onwards private traders, both Indian and European, were allowed to export opium via Bombay against passes issued by the company on the payment of a moderate duty.⁵ The pass system remained in force for the rest of the century.

Simultaneously, Malwa opium was the source of huge earnings for various indigenous groups in western and central India during the first half of the nineteenth century. During this period the East India Company derived very little direct benefit from these exports.⁶ Additionally, the failure of the company to establish itself as the sole supplier of opium led to the bulk of the surpluses that accrued from Malwa opium production being appropriated by non-company participants in the enterprise. A significant proportion of these were retained by Indians in the form of rent, dues payable to intermediaries, land revenue, customs duties, insurance charges, interest, commissions, freight, and profits from sale. Over a fairly long period then, income from Malwa opium constituted a prominent source of wealth for various sections of Indian society.⁷

Thus, there can be no doubt that opium was one of the pillars that supported the Sindia economy for 50 crucial years. British ascendancy too did not immediately deprive the Sindias of this support. Rather, the period immediately after the Third Anglo-Maratha War was precisely the time when the clandestine trade in the drug was expanding. These were years

when the company had virtually no say in the everyday administrative matters of Gwalior. It is hardly surprising that negotiations for imposing on the Sindia state a treaty that would give to the company exclusive rights to the opium produce of the state reached a dead end during Baiza Bai's regency. This was the one state in Malwa that consistently avoided any firm commitment on the issue.⁸ The Sindia ruling elite looked upon opium as a critical financial resource. Moreover, for the Sindias opium was not just a question of revenues; conceding a monopoly to the company was a serious infringement of the internal autonomy of the Sindia state. A state that was so sensitive with regard to its formal authority and for which outward symbols associated with that authority were a matter of great concern, a monopoly was a privilege it could have reserved for itself alone. Of course in the case of opium it exercised no monopoly. Nevertheless in a situation where there could be prolonged disputes over the smallest of ceremonial procedures, conceding a monopoly could scarcely have been looked upon as a minor affair.

Let us not, however, overemphasize the symbolic meaning of not granting to the company exclusive rights over opium. Of more importance were the material interests that were involved. One would like to suggest that opium helped the state to offset the losses that it suffered in the Second and Third Anglo-Maratha Wars. It is difficult otherwise to account for the relative stability of the state in the first half of the nineteenth century or its capacity to maintain a large army till 1844.⁹ The army, it should be borne in mind, could no longer be sustained through wars of conquest or raiding expeditions after 1818.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Sindia state was earning a large revenue from opium through customs duties, sales tax and the state's share of produce on land. It is not possible to quantify these items due to the paucity of source material. Yet it is certain that there was a marked increase in land under poppy during the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁰ This is reflected in the fivefold increase in shipments of Malwa opium to China between 1818/19 (977 chests) and 1823/4 (5,535 chests), and a twelvefold increase by 1830/1 (12,856 chests).¹¹ We may assume that most of the increase took place as a

result of the extension of cultivation as there is no evidence for significant improvements in the process of extraction of juice from poppy.¹² Poppy cultivation was part of the mixed cropping pattern of Malwa cultivators. In the early nineteenth century dominant landed groups in the region coerced the peasants to set aside the bulk of the irrigated and high fertility fields for opium cultivation, often at the expense of vegetables. The company's opium agent remarked in 1826 that, 'The high price opium rose to, had induced the Ryots, or rather led the proprietors or renters of villages to compel the Ryots no matter how, whether by advances made through the sowcars, or assured advantages to sow every spot of ground they could with poppy to the exclusion of all the different kinds of vegetables, usually produced round villages'.¹³

The Sindia state had already put in place an elaborate infrastructure to realize duties on the transit and sale of opium in its territories. The collection of these duties was particularly systematic in an area like Mandsaur that was otherwise relatively backward as compared to, say, Ujjain. For example, in the second decade of the nineteenth century there were 46 collection points for opium transit duties in the Mandsaur *pargana*—24 of these were *nakas* or customs posts while 22 were halting places or *khunts* (literally, places where bullocks could be unyoked and tethered).¹⁴ At each *naka* 1 *anna* per *man* of opium was to be paid while 2 *annas* per *man* had to be paid at each *khunt*.¹⁵ It is pertinent that in the small adjoining state of Pratapgarh, ruled by a minor chieftain, a complex arrangement for sharing transit duties had sprung up around opium. It would be worthwhile to provide a detailed breakup of these duties:

DUTIES ON SALE AND TRANSIT OF OPIUM, PRATAPGARH TOWN, c.1820

	<i>Rs</i>	<i>annas</i>	<i>paise</i>
I. From Banias of the town:			
(a) For each <i>man</i> purchased in the villages and brought to the town for sale:			
1. on account of the government per <i>man</i>	0	11	3
2. on account of the <i>kamavisdar</i> per <i>man</i>	0	1	0

Table continued

	<i>Rs</i>	<i>annas</i>	<i>paise</i>
3. A proportion of opium on account of government, per <i>man</i> , equal in weight to (value)	(5	0	0)
(b) For opium carried out of the town for sale elsewhere:			
1. on account of the government, per bullock load [= 3 <i>man</i> ?]	1	8	0
2. on account of <i>kunvar</i> [chief] per bullock load	0	12	0
3. on account of <i>kamavisdar</i> , per bullock load	0	2	0
4. protection money to government per bullock load	0	6	0
II. From Baniyas natives of Mandsaur and all other parts of Kanthal,* except town of Pratapgarh, pay:			
1. for opium whether imported or exported, per bullock load	1	12	0
2. on account of the <i>kunvar</i> , per bullock load	0	12	0
3. on account of the <i>kamavisdar</i> , per bullock load	0	6	0
III. From Baniyas of Mewar, Marwar and other places			
1. for opium whether imported or exported, per bullock load	3	8	0
2. for the <i>kunvar</i> , per bullock load	0	12	0
3. for the <i>kamavisdar</i> , per bullock load	0	2	0
4. protection money, per bullock load	0	6	0

Source: Dangerfield's Report.

Note: *The sub-region of Rajasthan in which Pratapgarh is situated.

Further, the consistently high quality of the silver coins issued under Daulat Rao Sindia, and subsequently under Baiza Bai, is an indication of the sound monetary condition of the Sindia economy in the early decades of the nineteenth century. James Prinsep, assay-master of the government mint in Calcutta, noted that the silver rupee minted at Gwalior was the most outstanding of the Sindia coins. Jan Lingen and Kenneth Wiggins have, in their study on Sindia coins, listed a silver rupee weighing 173 grains, which, they observe, 'is the first of a series of rupees struck in much

the same style as one another practically every year until the end of Daulat Rao's reign'.¹⁶ The minting of coins at a very large number of places in the Sindia territories, the diversity of coins of numerous denominations, and the abundance of copper coins all point towards deep monetization in the region during the early nineteenth century.

Apart from the revenue that the drug yielded to the Sindia state and various intermediaries, there were the returns which investments in the opium enterprise brought to bankers, the landed aristocracy and members of the royal family. Some of these investments were of the nature of speculative advances to the state by *ijaradars* (revenue farmers) who then maximized their income by promoting opium cultivation. Quite a few leading *ijaradars*, as for instance Appa Gangadhar who held the contract for opium-rich Mandsaur, earned profits by directly arranging for the supply of opium to wholesale markets.¹⁷ Then there were the big banking firms that stood surety for the *ijaradars* or extended loans to the state against future revenues. The prospect of massive earnings from opium during the 1820s, when smuggling was at its peak, naturally increased the values of the revenue farms. The *ijaras* and personal landed estates should be viewed as captive sources of opium supply. This in turn provided to the ruling elite an opportunity to amass huge private fortunes. At the same time sufficient cash reserves were available to the state thereby reinforcing stability of the ruling elite.¹⁸

Since many of the big *sahukars* were simultaneously contractors for recruitment of troops, there was a close link between opium profits and military mobilization.¹⁹ It is also quite likely that both Daulat Rao and Baiza Bai had invested part of their private wealth in opium. There is no direct evidence for this in contemporary colonial records but then the company's officials could not have known much about financial dealings at this level. How much of Baiza Bai's enormous personal income was invested in or earned through opium must remain a matter of speculation. Daulat Rao and Baiza Bai would have made their investments through the bankers at the durbar, perhaps through Gokul Parakh. The Sindia ruling elite owed much of its financial and political strength in the first half of the nineteenth

century to the wealth generated by the commercial activities of the opium traders of Malwa.

The available evidence suggests that by the 1830s the landed magnates of the Sindia territories had lost interest in opium. There are hardly any references to the direct involvement of high officials, big landowners or bankers in the opium enterprise in colonial records of the late 1830s. It seems that the speculative ventures that the clandestine trade had given rise to attracted massive investments in the drug. Now, with the introduction of the pass system and the emergence of Bombay as the main outlet for Malwa opium the returns were not sufficiently alluring for the Sindia elite to associate with the trade in a big way.²⁰ The class of *ijaradars*-cum-bankers-cum-officials typified earlier by Gokul Parakh preferred, by the mid-1830s, to make use of positions at the durbar to augment their incomes in less risky ways through revenue farming, interest on loans to the state, discounting bills of exchange and profits from military contracts. It goes without saying that most of those who belonged to this class had initially accumulated their capital by speculating in opium.

A new breed of bankers, the most outstanding of whom was Mani Ram, began to dominate the Sindia economy from the 1830s onwards. The stability that this class had acquired—a development in which earlier earnings from opium played no insignificant part—made it look towards more secure returns from long-term linkages with the state. It also meant that this class had a stake in maintaining the autonomy of the Sindia state, leading eventually to a breakdown in relations with the company and the military campaign of 1843.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century the city of Ujjain, which had been the main centre of all the large-scale financial dealings connected with opium, began to lose its political and administrative importance as Gwalior became the permanent location of the durbar.²¹ Simultaneously, the emergence of neighbouring Indore during the same period considerably reduced the economic significance of Ujjain. The gradual decline of Ujjain contributed to the withdrawal of big capital in this part of India from opium, which in turn served to reinforce the process of that decline. Ironically it

was the smuggling trade itself that speeded up the shift away from Ujjain since the major smuggling routes passed through north-western Malwa.²² The distance of the city from the remote northern Malwa *parganas* which produced very large quantities of opium, and through which most of the smuggling routes to Rajasthan passed, would have led to smaller quantities of the drug being warehoused in and around Ujjain. The physical proximity of Ujjain to the Holkar capital, where the company maintained its main civil establishment in Malwa, rendered the place unsafe from the point of view of opium transactions. Not only were the happenings at Ujjain closely scrutinized by colonial officials but there were actual attempts to undermine the commercial and financial status of the city.²³ The lack of strong support from the durbar in the post-Baiza Bai period sealed the fate of Ujjain.

Pali in Rajasthan, where the smuggling routes from Malwa soon converged, now became the main centre of the wholesale trade in the western Indian hinterland. Pali was essentially a transit point where the earnings from opium were in the form of commissions and brokerage. Yet the shift to Pali provided Rajasthani merchants with crucial advantages. With this shift they could establish themselves as a key component of the entire network; otherwise they might have remained marginal to it. We are referring here to the merchants of Rajasthan proper and not to the traders of Rajasthani origin (including the Marwaris) settled in Malwa for many generations. The family and caste connections of the Pali dealers with Rajasthani merchants resident in Malwa were vital for the expansion of their businesses. The Gosains, who as armed ascetics had considerable social and religious influence within Ujjain, had also established a powerful base in southern Rajasthan where they dominated the transportation of opium from Malwa to Gujarat.²⁴ They maintained a retinue of Gosain informers and often relied on the support of the Charuns to carry opium to Pali.²⁵

A discussion of the opium smuggling enterprise promoted, under the aegis of the Sindia state, by Malwa opium traders, would be incomplete without a reference to far-off Sind. This would enable us to grasp the

ramifications of the undertaking. One group that was drawn, rather unexpectedly, into the ever-widening scope of the clandestine network solely due to rampant smuggling was that of Sindhi merchants. Sind was located at too great a distance from Malwa to have otherwise become a part of this network. There were no traditional links between the spheres of activity of business groups from the two regions. Recent research, including my own, has shown that a unique set of circumstances brought Sind within the orbit of the international opium economy. For nearly a quarter of a century Karachi in Sind was the main entrepot in the Arabian Sea which handled short-distance shipment of the drug from producing areas in Malwa to west coast ports like Daman for the onward voyage to South-East Asia. Some of the factors that contributed to this development were: (i) the proximity of Sind to Rajasthan on the one hand and to the Gujarat coast on the other, (ii) the favourable location of Karachi port, (iii) the presence in Lower Sind of an enterprising class of merchants with extensive financial and commercial connections, (iv) the support extended to this class by the Talpur Amirs who ruled over Lower Sind, and (v) the lateness of colonial penetration of the region. Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the primary cause for the annexation of Sind by the company in 1843 was the continued leakage of Malwa opium through Karachi during the 1830s, i.e. after the introduction of the pass system.²⁶ The final annexation of Sind, as has been mentioned, occurred in the same year as the Gwalior campaign of 1843.



Even before Malwa opium became a major commodity in the overseas export trade of the west coast of India towards the end of the eighteenth century, customary medicinal as well as recreational use of the drug—produced in Malwa—was widespread in western India. The opium poppy, from which the drug is extracted, has been widely cultivated in Malwa definitely since the sixteenth century. The pattern of traditional opium use in Malwa, Rajasthan and Gujarat, as reflected in statements made before

the Royal Commission on Opium (1893–5), was one in which there were three distinct phases of ‘normal’ exposure to the drug during the lifespan of an individual.²⁷ The evidence relates to the last decade of the nineteenth century, but it is unlikely that customary practises had altered significantly during the course of the century. This is obvious from the fact that novel methods of ingestion such as smoking were not acceptable even at the end of the century so that the Commission recommended measures to curb consumption in this form.²⁸

As a matter of common practice, individuals were first exposed to the drug as infants. The practice of administering opium to infants in minuscule quantities, usually till they were three to five years old, was quite common, especially in Malwa and Rajasthan. The substance was withdrawn as the child grew older. The second phase of exposure to the drug, for males in particular, was after marriage (i.e. after the consummation of marriage).²⁹ Consumption of very small doses of opium on social occasions by married men was traditionally acceptable. Besides, opium was habitually consumed on a daily basis, in relatively larger quantities, by a sizeable number of men and women in the 30–40 years age group. The quantity could range from doses of half a *ratti* (a *ratti* is approximately 120 mg) to three *rattis* taken from one to three times a day.³⁰ This marked the third, and often addictive, phase of exposure. These were the ‘moderate’ addicts, many of whom had initially taken to daily consumption for medical reasons and were then unable to give up the drug. It may be mentioned that opium was regarded as a common household remedy in western India and it did not require much effort to become a ‘moderate’ addict.

From the last quarter of the eighteenth century Malwa opium was increasingly channelized into the overseas export trade. Profits from the export trade were several times larger than those from the local trade. Ujjain was the principal centre of the wholesale trade in Malwa: ‘One may say in fact that the whole exportation trade of Malwa opium centres directly or indirectly in the Metropolis of Oujein’.³¹ A British soldier who had spent time at the city during the last decade of the eighteenth century stated that opium traders ‘from different parts of the country’ came to Ujjain

to purchase the drug.³² The city and the neighbouring town of Barnagar virtually regulated the entire wholesale trade.

The important dealers whom we hear of in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when names first begin to appear in the company's records, are Lakshmichand Panjray, Jadonjee Chabeelchand, Bhaidas Gokuldas, Appa Gangadhar and Bahadur Mal Seth. Lakshmichand Panjray, 'mahajan of Ujjain', operated with his six or seven brothers.³³ This firm remained active in the trade for at least half a century. The 'very old established house' of Bhaidas Gokuldas was another 'great dealer in opium' at Ujjain as was Jadonjee Chabeelchand.³⁴ Bhaidas Gokuldas was a Surat firm that was active in the trade since the turn of the century. Its branches had operated for a long time at Indore, Ujjain and Ratlam.³⁵

Ganesdas Kisnaji, the name of Tatyā Jog Kibe's firm (*pedhi*)³⁶ was the leading establishment at Indore. To further his business, Kibe put to good use his alliance with the British authorities as well as his position as minister at Holkar's court. Ganesdas Kisnaji's business interests extended to Pune, Daman, Bombay, Calcutta and Hyderabad. By the 1820s, Jog was 'carrying his attention to Bombay and Calcutta, from the extension of his speculation to those Presidencies, as well as over a great part of India'.³⁷ His involvement in smuggling opium to Daman was well known. For instance, the firm 'had a share in all opium smuggled to Daman' in 1822.³⁸ Among his allies Kibe counted Bahadur Mal Seth, the 'Rothschild of Malwa', who dominated the opium trade at Kota.³⁹ Bahadur Mal had established a firm grip over the opium trade at Kota by 1825. The two insurance brokers Poonasah Man Singh and Chaman Singh Hurruckchand, both from Indore, too were closely connected with the Malwa opium trade.⁴⁰ Besides, we have references to Madho Seth who for a long time headed the panchayat of Ujjain; Fateh Chand, 'an opulent Malwa *sahukar*'; Nugraje, a 'Marwar merchant'; Hazari Lall, another Marwari, and a host of traders from Pali (most of whom came to the Mandsaur market to purchase their opium).⁴¹

Appa Gangadhar the *kamavisdar* of opium-rich Mandsaur *pargana* emerges from contemporary records as a significant participant in trade apart from being a long established revenue farmer. Appa Gangadhar's

family had been *kamavisdars* of Mandsaur and Khachrod for three generations. Malcolm mentions Appa Gangadhar's grandfather Baloba as having established himself in these *parganas* about the middle of the eighteenth century. His son Vithoba, Appa Gangadhar's father, succeeded Baloba.⁴² In the 1820s Gangadhar's brother looked after the affairs of Khachrod.⁴³ In the Sindia scheme of things, Appa Gangadhar's authority in north-western Malwa was virtually absolute. His stranglehold over land coupled with his political position furnished Gangadhar with the resources necessary for prosecuting his opium enterprise vigorously. A somewhat shadowy figure unlike the more flamboyant Tatyā Jog, Gangadhar's range of activities extended to transporting opium clandestinely through Rajasthan. He had developed a network in association with the Marwari traders of Pali to smuggle the opium from Mandsaur to Rajasthan. In fact prior to the mid-1820s the company hardly suspected his involvement in opium smuggling. Other prominent Sindia officials such as Gokul Parakh and Man Singh Patankar too had interests in opium, but where Appa Gangadhar scored over them was in having stable physical control over the single largest opium producing area of Malwa. Besides, Mandsaur had the advantage of being close to Rajasthan. The Marwaris controlled a large share of the trade in Malwa opium. Without them and their Rajasthani connections it would not have been possible to defeat the colonial objective of monopolizing the drug. Malcolm, when pitted against the Ujjain and Barnagar Marwari syndicate discovered how potent the 'combination of Oujein and Nolye [Barnagar] soukars [who] are almost all from Marwar, and are united by tribe as well as interest', could be.⁴⁴

The big players in the opium trade, who had a monopoly over the supply of opium for the export market, operated mainly from Ujjain, Indore, Barnagar, Mandsaur, and Ratlam. The company, as well as private traders from the west coast (primarily Bombay merchants), had to procure their supplies from these wholesale dealers. Internally within Malwa, the wholesale trade in the commodity involved two kinds of speculative transactions that eventually determined the prices at which exporters could purchase it. One, known as *jalab*, was between cultivators or whoever had

control over the produce at the level of the village (which could include revenue farmers) and opium traders. *Jalab* referred to contracts entered into, shortly after sowing, to purchase the entire produce of respective cultivators at a fixed price. As a transaction between cultivator and local moneylender, it always worked to the advantage of the latter. The tendency was to fix the price as low as possible, which it was possible to do as advances in cash or kind were made to the cultivators to meet their immediate requirements. These advances were adjusted along with the interest against the final settlement. For many moneylenders and traders, *jalah* amounted to *satta* (trading in futures). Distressed cultivators would approach 'gambling money-bankers', who bought the crop for the forthcoming season at a fixed rate. As a result of this *jalah* transaction the peasants invariably parted 'with their crops for a little ready money at half or two-thirds their value'.⁴⁵ The expansion of the export trade or the absence of the company's monopoly meant nothing to the peasant. If anything, levels of exploitation might have been intensified. A detailed account of the system, written in 1847, shows that *jalah* continued to operate in the 1840s as the basic mechanism for extracting surplus from the producer.

The other speculative transaction was the *cowri* (*kauri*) *satta*. This was the term used for time-bargains among opium dealers. The time-bargains were fairly complicated and elaborate. They usually commenced around the time of sowing of the opium crop at the beginning of the *rabi* season, and were settled twelve months later. Indeed most of the wholesale opium transactions were of a speculative nature and the twelve-month *satta* was the major speculation of the various contracts that the dealers entered into among themselves. *Cowri satta* was an intra-Malwa affair (with perhaps some Rajasthani merchants also involved in it). The long period over which the settlement of accounts took place implied that the parties to the contract, and/or the brokers involved, knew each other intimately. There were two types of dealers who engaged in this *satta*. The first category consisted of dealers who entered into contracts with the objective of actually procuring opium, either for export or for resale within Malwa. The second was that of the speculators for whom the *satta* was principally a form of

gambling. Often the commodity did not physically enter the transaction at all.

Cowri satta resembled stock-jobbing with the difference that 'the real article is as often given as the difference paid'.⁴⁶ It was a contract wherein 'one Soucar, or Bunia, giving another, before the harvest a Cowree, as a pledge that he will pay him a specific price, at a certain date' for a specified quantity of a commodity (opium, grain, cotton, etc.).⁴⁷ Malcolm has described the system in some detail:

The practice of *Courie Sutte* [*sic*] in Grain, Cotton and Opium is a species of gambling like stock jobbing. Delals or Brokers proclaim the price of the Article and the day of settlement. On the bargain being made a courie is given and a short paper written by the Broker which specifies the price amount and day of settlement. These bargains are sometimes for more than the market can easily furnish, and often made by men who neither can produce nor pay for the amount bought and sold. The general mode therefore is to pay and receive the difference in cash between the price on the day of purchase and the day of settlement. But still there is an acknowledged right in both parties to give or receive the article bargained for. This is meant as a check upon unfair proceedings such as combination to lower price &c.⁴⁸

Contracts were finalized as early as October for deliveries to be made around November the following year.⁴⁹ These contracts were made on the basis of the perceived demand for the next year—a difficult calculation to make at the best of times. Volumes contracted for and prices agreed upon partially influenced the area sown with poppy. The bargains pertained to the opium produce of the current season only. Accounts were settled on the full moon of the month of Kartik (which falls in November), the following year. As the export trade progressed during the twenties and thirties, traders who had close contacts with Bombay and Daman would have been better placed to estimate the demand.

The Barnagar (Nolai) market occupied a central position in regulating opium time-bargains. There were intricate procedures which were known and understood throughout Malwa, reflecting a high degree of sophistication in stock trading and futures. Every year in October, fifteen days after the Dussehra festival, a panchayat or board of leading opium merchants of Barnagar laid down the price for the settlement of the time-bargains. This was not an arbitrary price, but was based on an assessment

of the state of the market. The price established by the Barnagar panchayat was not binding on the speculators but was 'taken as the standard by which parties are guided, however distant they may be'.⁵⁰

The expansion of the opium trade and with it of speculative ventures would have tended to strengthen the traditional regulatory mechanism. This in turn spawned several other, at times more complex, types of time-bargains. There were short-term and intermediate time-bargains as well, involving small traders and petty speculators. *Satta* transactions were not confined to opium. The *sahukars* had wide-ranging interests which extended to other commodities like cotton, grain and bullion. Besides, bills of exchange were also a lucrative field for speculation. With their large warehouses the big wholesale dealers could keep back stocks for much longer than the petty traders.⁵¹ It is this group that the company was most wary of and sought constantly to exclude from the opium trade, but without any success. The inability to penetrate the dense and tightly regulated wholesale network ultimately forced the company to abandon all hopes of establishing a monopoly over the opium produce of Malwa.

From the end of the Anglo-Maratha wars to the end of the First Opium War, the Malwa opium enterprise was worth about Rs. 2 crore annually for India. Unlike Bengal opium, which directly benefited the colonial state, earnings from Malwa opium largely represented private, mainly indigenous, profits. It was this, as John Richards remarks, that gave to Malwa opium its great multiplier effect.⁵² Over a period of 23 years, from 1821 to 1843, the total gross revenue earned by the colonial state from Malwa opium was around Rs. 7.5 crore.⁵³ Of this, Rs. 5 crore came from the company's auctions between 1821 and 1830, an annual average of a little over Rs. 50 lakh. As this included the cost price of opium, mostly retained in Malwa, the company's share did not amount to more than Rs. 20–Rs. 30 lakh every year during the twenties. This was just a small fraction of the total worth of the trade. The pass duty brought to the company Rs. 2.26 crore from 1830 to 1843, an annual average of nearly Rs. 17.5 lakh. This may be regarded as net revenue and denotes an even smaller share of the total value of the trade, which had actually increased during the thirties. Even

at a conservative estimate then, down to the 1840s Malwa opium generated over Rs. 1 crore annually for private, mainly indigenous, enterprise. As the largest producer of Malwa opium (a little less than half the total produce), the export of the drug would have infused Rs. 40–Rs. 50 lakh into the Sindia economy every year in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The pattern of the opium trade as it had evolved by the first decade of the nineteenth century ensured that its earnings were not confined to west coast merchants. A constant refrain in the correspondence exchanged between Jardine Matheson, the leading British agency house in China dealing in opium, and Bombay consignors of the drug such as Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy is about the problems they encountered in transactions with the Malwa wholesalers. Malwa dealers were always unwilling to part with information about the actual quantity of opium that would be available in a particular season or the prices at which the drug would be sold to outsiders. Bombay dealers, it must be stressed, were essentially outsiders from the point of view of the Malwa wholesale trade. The Malwa traders were known to frequently circulate erroneous reports about estimated production and prices while engaged in their own time-bargains.⁵⁴ There was also a tendency on their part to deceive the exporters about the quality of their opium consignments. An exasperated William Jardine wrote in 1836 that, 'The Marwarrees [referring to traders of Malwa and Rajasthan] have had a great deal too much their own way of late, and have practised many abominable tricks in the quality and weight of the Drug sold by them'.⁵⁵ The Bombay traders were rarely able to fathom the intricacies of the Malwa market. 'The Marwarrees', Jardine commented in a letter sent to Bombay, 'must have been keeping you all most completely in the dark respecting the supply of Malwa'. He added that Bombay dealers 'appear to know less of what is doing in Malwa than we do of the proceedings in the Nankin silk districts, and our information is scanty enough'.⁵⁶

Internally the Malwa trade remained a close-knit affair that allowed the wholesalers to protect their profits. At no stage during the first half of the nineteenth century were the peasants in a position to sell directly to the Bombay dealers. The Bombay exporters had to therefore content

themselves with the profits that they could make *after* the drug had been purchased from the wholesale suppliers of the interior. The Malwa traders thus took away a fairly large chunk of the profits and continued to do so beyond the 1840s. Their hold antedated colonial supremacy in western India. We have seen that Malwa *sahukars* derived their strength from the historical situation in the region, of which the most outstanding feature was the political and military clout of Gwalior. It might be worthwhile repeating here that that the Sindia state could be fully subjugated only after 1843-4. The stifling of the Sindia economy by the 1840s denied to its merchant class the chance to develop into a modern industrial capitalist class in the environment of Malwa. We would do well to remember that the Maratha aristocracy of Malwa, a section of which actively participated in the opium enterprise, did not become a major component of the modern business class of western India. Nevertheless it would not be easy to account for the rise of industrial capitalism in western India without making a reference to the history of Malwa opium and the role of princely Gwalior in it.

NOTES

1. James H. Mills, *Cannabis Britannica: Empire, Trade, and Prohibition*, Oxford, 2005 (first published 2003), p. 4.
2. John F. Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', *IESHR*, Vol. 39, Nos. 2&3 (2002), pp. 159-61, Tables 1.1, 1.2.
3. 30 June 1803, NAI, Home Department, Misc. Letters, Vol. 271.
4. The bulk of the opium produce of the company's territories in eastern India was brought to Calcutta where it was sold by auction to private traders for export to China.
5. For the company's early Malwa opium policy see *Parliamentary Papers, Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, 1831, Vol. VI, Appendix IV (no. 320 D).
6. Except for the brief period during the 1820s when the company auctioned some Malwa opium on the pattern of Bengal opium, and then from 1831 onwards, the relatively small revenue (till the annexation of Sind) derived from the sale of Malwa opium passes. It was estimated that between 1821 and 1823 the average annual profit realized by the company from the sale of Malwa opium was Rs. 7 lakh. In 1832/3 the company earned about Rs. 20 lakh from passes for 11,000 chests of Malwa opium, a mere 12 per cent of the total *opium* revenues of the Government of India. 'Net proceeds of the opium sales in 1822', 29 August 1822, SR, 26/19 December 1822; Minute by Warden, 30 April 1823, SR, 56/12 June 1823; Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', Table 1.1, p. 160.

7. Commenting on the role of Malwa opium as a source of income and employment for indigenous groups, John Richards observes: 'Generating and collecting funds for opium advances to cultivators generated income for an array of village moneylenders, village headmen, and an ascending sequence of Indian bankers. Gathering raw opium, assembling, curing, packing and transporting it, employed thousands of labourers, guards, carters and other workers. As opium passed through a chain of transactions on its way to Bombay it offered reliable profits to numerous brokers, traders, and commission agents'. Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', p. 174.
8. See Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion*, pp. 101–2.
9. It may be recalled that at the time of the military campaign of 1843 it was estimated that 40,000 soldiers were concentrated in the city of Gwalior alone. Sleeman to Government of India, 21 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 220/23 March 1844.
10. 'Statement of the number of Beeghas of opium cultivated in the Pergunnahs in Malwa', 15 November 1823, SR, 16/5 December 1823; S. Swinton, opium agent, to BCSO, 15 February 1826, SR, 45/9 March 1826; Swinton to BCSO, 25 May 1826, SR, 21/22 June 1826.
11. W.E. Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants: Jardine Matheson & Co., a China agency of the early nineteenth century*, London, 1979, p. 21, Table III. The figure for 1818/19 is very much on the lower side, because the comprehensive report of F. Dangerfield (1820) had estimated that approximately 5,000 chests of opium were being produced in Malwa at the time of the third Anglo-Maratha war. There is no denying the fact that a 100 per cent increase, at the least, occurred in opium production by the beginning of the 1830s. In 1832 the company issued passes for 11,000 chests while 3007 chests were exported clandestinely from Daman in the same season. By the end of the 1830s nearly 22,000 chests of Malwa opium were being shipped to China. Opium in bulk, especially opium intended for export, was reckoned in 'chests': 1 Malwa chest = 140 lbs (63.5 kg.).
12. Methods of poppy cultivation observed by Dangerfield in c.1820 are identical to those described in the *Malwa Gazetteer*, compiled at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cf. C.E. Luard, *The Central India State Gazetteer Series*, Vol. V, *Western States (Malwa) Gazetteer*, Part A, Bombay, 1908, p. 19.
13. Swinton to BCSO, 26 May 1826, SR, 23/22 June 1826.
14. *Khunt* developed into an impost on property for protection granted within the limits of a certain area.
15. DR.
16. Lingen and Wiggins, *Coins of the Sindhias*, pp. 91–2.
17. Cf. Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion*, p. 113.
18. The official (royal) treasury of the Sindia state, called the *Ganga Jali*, reportedly had a reserve of Rs. 3 crore at the time of Daulat Rao's death. He is supposed to have 'prided himself upon never taking from, and always adding to, it'. Baiza Bai added another Rs. 1 crore to the treasury so that in 1833 Sindia reserves stood at Rs. 4 crore. Letter of Sleeman, 21 October 1843, NAI, FDP, 220/23 March 1844.
19. See Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion*, pp. 45–8.

20. For those investors who had an imperfect knowledge of the China market, dealing in opium was a high-risk venture. Otherwise too, the trade was subject to considerable fluctuations during the 1820s and 1830s. Carl Trocki has pointed out that 'the system lurched out of control' in this period and that 'there were a series of booms and busts in the trade and a constant tendency to speculate, which in the short run, made the trade seem very risky'. Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade, 1750–1950*, London, 1999, p. 94.
21. The ancient city of Ujjain was chosen by the Sindias as their capital when they established their authority in Malwa in the eighteenth century. It remained the capital of the Sindias till c.1810, when the durbar shifted to Gwalior.
22. See Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion*, pp. 118–20.
23. Cf. Malcolm to Close, 3 March 1821, SR, 2/23 April 1821.
24. There was much muscle-flexing at Ujjain by the Gosains and other ascetic groups at the time of the *kumbh*, which could at times lead to outbreaks of violence at the twelve-yearly pilgrimage. We have a detailed account of a 'sanguinary conflict' during the *kumbh-mela* of 1826 at Ujjain, 'which although commenced by the Goshains, led to their utter defeat'. 'Great Fair at Oojein', *Delhi Gazettee*, 12 June 1850.
25. A letter intercepted by the company's officials sheds light on their well-knit organization in Rajasthan and Gujarat. 'Letter from Gosain Goverdhinghur and others of Purtapghur, to Gosains Rutunghur Ramghur and others at Ahmedabad', tr., enclosed in John Dunlop, collector, Ahmedabad, to James Williams, resident, Baroda, 5 June 1820, RD, Vol. 9/9.
26. The boldest assertion of this argument is to be found in J. Y. Wong, 'British Annexation of Sind in 1843: An Economic Perspective', *MAS*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1997), pp. 226, 234–7. A more nuanced assessment is presented by Claude Markovits in his study of the Sind merchants: '[T]hat some correlation existed between British opium policy on the one hand and the decision to annex Sind seems indubitable, but it does not prove that the desire to close the Sind route to Malwa opium was the main motive of the annexation'. Markovits does, however, emphasize that 'the occupation of Karachi by British troops in 1839 allowed the East India Company effectively to close the Pali–Karachi route and to redirect the Malwa opium trade through Bombay, which they had tried, unsuccessfully, to do for almost twenty years'. Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 41 and n. 23. See also, Claude Markovits, 'The Political Economy of Opium Smuggling in Early Nineteenth Century India: Leakage or Resistance?', *MAS*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009), pp. 89–111.
27. Based on *Royal Commission on Opium, Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. IV, London, 1894–5.
28. See Government of India, 19 October 1895, *Collection of Papers relating to the Royal Commission on Opium*, Calcutta, 1896, p. 2.
29. Cf. Dr. A. P. Hove, *Tours for Scientific and Economic Research, Made in Guzerat ... in 1787–1788, Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, new series, XVI, 1855, pp. 126–7.
30. *Royal Commission on Opium*, Vol. IV, p. 45.
31. Wellesley, 20 September 1819, PLB, 2/45.

32. William Hunter quoted in Stewart Gordon, 'Burhanpur: Entrepot and Hinterland, 1659–1750', *IESHR*, 25, 4 (1988), p. 436.
33. 24 August 1803, SR, 4/3 November 1803; Wellesley, 20 September 1819, SR, 13/12 November 1819.
34. 24 August 1803, SR, 4/3 November 1803; Remington Crawford and Co., 20 January 1821, SR, 4/20 February 1821; 24 January 1821, SR, 19/6 April 1821; 14 March 1821, SR, 18/11 May 1821, enclosure; Swinton, 2 January 1827, SR, 12/8 February 1827.
35. Swinton, 7 August 1827, SR, 25/12 September 1827.
36. Tatyā Jog, 24 March 1820, SR, 23/6 June 1820; Taylor, 'Memorandum', SR, 10/14 December 1821; G.S. Sardesai, *Marathi Riyasat*, new edn, Bombay, 1992, Vol. VIII, pp. 306n, 493, 497; *Madhya Pradesh Gazetteers, Indore District*, Bhopal, 1971, p. 82; Raghubir Singh, ed., *Malwa ke Mahan Vidroh Kalin Abhilekh*, Sitamau, 1986, p. 196, n.1; Interview, Zamindar, 1991.
37. Swinton, 24 August 1826, SR, 11/22 June 1826.
38. Swinton, 7 August 1827, SR, 25/12 September 1827.
39. Cf. 10 November 1825, SR, 5/8 December 1825; John Phipps, *A Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade, ..., etc.*, Calcutta, 1835, p. 339n.
40. Wellesley, 20 September 1819, SR, 13/12 November 1819; Tatyā Jog, 24 March 1820, SR, 23/6 June 1820; 4 April 1820, SR, 25/6 June 1820.
41. Swinton, 17 April 1824, SR, 16/14 May 1824; Taylor, 'Memorandum', SR, 10/14 December 1821; Taylor, 4 April 1823, SR, 41/12 June 1823; John Malcolm, *Report on the Province of Malwa and Adjoining Districts*, 11 February 1821, Calcutta, 1927, p. 258n.
42. Malcolm, *Report*, p. 287; Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. II, p. 247.
43. Swinton, 27 April 1826, SR, 13/22 June 1826.
44. Malcolm, 3 March 1821, SR, 2/23 April 1821, enclosure.
45. Malcolm, 14 September 1820, SR, 14/24 November 1820; Malcolm, *Report*, p. 287n. See also Elijah Impey, *A Report on the Cultivation, Preparation, and Adulteration of Malwa Opium*, December 1847, Bombay, 1848, pp. 42–3.
46. Malcolm, 14 September 1820, SR, 14/24 November 1820.
47. Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. II, pp. 39–40; Malcolm, 3 April 1823, SR, 41/12 June 1823.
48. 3 March 1821, SR, 2/23 April 1821.
49. The following account of *cowri satta* is based mainly on Malcolm, 3 March 1821; SR, 2/23 April 1821; Impey, *Report*, pp. 41–4; G.R. Aberigh-Mackay, *The Chiefs of Central India*, Calcutta, 1879, pp. lxxvii–lxxx.
50. Impey, *Report*, pp. 41–2.
51. Cf. DR.
52. Richards, 'Opium Industry in British India', p. 173.
53. Calculated from SR.
54. 1 December 1831, Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Letter Books, reel 1.
55. 17 May 1836, Jardine Matheson Archives, Letter Book C4/5, 44–6.
56. 8 July 1836, Jardine Matheson Archives, Letter Book C4/5, 70–1.



Towards 1857

IN DECEMBER 1857 the British authorities at Mysore detained a person by the name of Sitaram Baba' alias Mahapurush, who was suspected of involvement in the Great Revolt. Mahapurush was interrogated at length when it was discovered that he had some sensational disclosures to make about an alleged widespread conspiracy to overthrow British rule. He came up with an elaborate story containing details of the conspiracy, placing Baiza Bai at the centre of his narrative. 'The Baiza Bhaiee', according to Mahapurush, 'was the person who first commenced this conspiracy about twenty years ago. At the time that she was taken from Gwalior and kept at Nassick. She continued plotting at Oojein, to which place she was afterwards removed.' After giving an account of the various people who were supposed to have rendered assistance to her, Mahapurush spoke of Baiza Bai having 'cooled in the matter' from the time that her great granddaughter was married to Jiyaji. Subsequently Nana Sahib took the lead and organized the movement.¹

The Baba's statement, which is vital to those who speak of the Revolt as a 'conspiracy', is dismissed by S.N. Sen in his authoritative history of the Revolt as a 'cock-and-bull story'.² P.C. Gupta, who examined the early career of Nana Sahib in great detail in his 'Bithur trilogy', did not come across any evidence linking Bajirao's adopted son to such a conspiracy.

Gupta concludes that 'this very interesting account does not appear to be reliable. A good deal of it is obviously false'.³

The statement, however, needs to be approached from a different perspective. The first impression on going through the text is that this is the testimony of a highly political person. Mahapurush revealed his fairly extensive knowledge of people and events in several parts of the country. Insofar as Baiza Bai was concerned, he outlined the numerous phases of her career quite accurately. Certainly, some analytical thought had gone into Sitaram Baba's assessment of the Bai. Moreover there are several references in the story which, if viewed in the appropriate context can be startling. For instance, Mahapurush identified Seth Luchhmichund of Mathura as one of the prominent financiers of the Revolt. Seth Luchhmichund, a leading banker of north India, was the son of the celebrated Mani Ram of Gwalior.⁴

It is not pertinent to our purpose whether or not the statement of Mahapurush can be regarded as evidence to substantiate the theory of a conspiracy. His tale has a deeper significance. The Baba produced a definite thesis on the logic of political developments in early nineteenth century India. More specifically he had a well worked out understanding of the history of the conflict between the East India Company and its opponents. In tracing the genesis of the Revolt to Baiza Bai he also articulated the popular view in which the Bai was seen as the starting point of contemporary resistance to British rule. This was the political mythology of the mid-nineteenth century. To take him literally is to miss the point.

It is not without significance that the Gwalior-Malwa region was one of the main centres of the Revolt. What is more, Sindia soldiers played an important role in the events of 1857-8 and Gwalior was the place where some of the leading rebels converged in an attempt to intensify the struggle during the second phase of the Revolt. There are other aspects of the history of the anti-colonial tradition of the Gwalior-Malwa region which are relevant in the context of their relationship with the events of 1857, but have not received adequate attention. For instance, Ahmadullah Shah, the so-called 'Maulvi of Faizabad' who was one of the foremost leaders of the Revolt in Awadh, spent nearly five years in Gwalior and its neighbourhood

during the decades preceding 1857. It was at Gwalior that he received spiritual guidance as a disciple of Mehrab Shah Qadri.⁵ Ahmadullah's *pir*, Mehrab Shah, belonged to the Qadri Sufi Silsila (order). Significantly, prior to his initiation into the Sufi order, Mehrab Shah had served in one of the Maratha (Sindia?) military contingents.⁶ It is not unlikely that Mehrab Shah's intense dislike of the British (he is supposed to have enjoined all his disciples to wage *jihad* against the British), might have had its origins in the dislocation caused by the forced reduction in the military strength of the state due to the company's intervention.⁷ In any case, the Gwalior experience played an important role in shaping the ideological outlook of Ahmadullah Shah. It is precisely these histories and interconnections that colonial historiography has managed to hide, and so pervasive has been its influence that even nationalist historiography has been unsuccessful in illuminating this past adequately. Hence Sen's inability to appreciate the import of the narrative of Sitaram Baba.

Had he delved deeper Sen might have discovered that throughout the 1830s and 1840s Baiza Bai's name was linked to numerous conspiracies that had an underlying anti-British thrust. There were, for instance, a series of disturbances in the Deccan during the years that Baiza Bai resided at Nasik (1841–8), and she was suspected to be associated with some of these. In 1841–2 there were attempts to foment trouble in various parts of the Deccan, particularly in the Purandhar and Bijapur districts. In one incident a person by the name of Vyankat Rao Deshmukh had been arrested on the charge of recruiting a large contingent of Arab and other mercenaries in the Hyderabad territories. Some of the Marathi documents found in possession of Vyankat Rao indicated that Baiza Bai had promised to provide financial resources for the purpose. Once these troops had been raised, they were to proceed towards the Deccan, where on their arrival they were to be joined by 'other bodies of armed men'.⁸

Simultaneously there were references at this time to a person bearing the title 'Bhonsle Raja' who had been living for some time at the well known temple town of Jejuri near Pune and was linked to Baiza Bai. The 'Bhonsle Raja' was accompanied by a large number of followers, many of whom

were probably armed. On further enquiry it was found that 'Bhonsle Raja' was actually Sahibji Bhonsle, a *mankari* (confidential servant, literally, 'a person entitled to certain marks of respect'), of Baiza Bai. Sahibji Bhonsle had made a trip to Kolhapur in early 1841 when Baiza Bai had not yet shifted to Nasik. It was this same Bhonsle who was suspected to have written the letter to Vyankat Rao asking him to raise troops.⁹

Though no specific charge could be brought against Baiza Bai, her name surfaced repeatedly in connection with various disturbances in the early forties. One was a rebellion at Badami in the Nizam's territories, where a person who declared himself to be 'Chhatrapati' had taken over the town and the fort with the help of his armed supporters. These rebels 'plundered the Government treasury and commenced the administration'. It was nearly a week before they could be captured.¹⁰ The Hyderabad resident found that Baiza Bai's name was mentioned during the course of the investigations into the Badami incidents. She was suspected of 'having secretly connived at more disturbances'.¹¹ The allegations were sufficiently serious for the governor general to personally write to her on the subject 'warning her of the necessity of the most guarded conduct on her part to prevent any further similar reports'.¹² Needless to add, Baiza Bai strongly denied the allegations. However, her name figured yet again in the wake of a conspiracy that came to light at Asirgarh in 1842.

Whether or not Baiza Bai initiated or actively encouraged such disturbances, the fact is that her presence at Nasik, in the heart of the Maratha homeland, was sufficient cause for diverse groups who were opposed to British presence to invoke her as a symbol of rebellion. This is indicative of the legitimacy that she possessed insofar as popular perception was concerned. She was viewed as the rightful ruler of the Sindia state who had been dispossessed by the company and its local allies. It is worth recalling that Baiza Bai had been continuously pressing her claim. This might have been for the record only, but it was an important symbolic gesture. Her peripatetic existence ever since she had been ousted from power cast her in the role of a persecuted exile, the impact of which on public imagination should not be underestimated. She could be projected as a champion of

anti-British causes. Baiza Bai came to represent, though not necessarily with her consent, resistance to colonial domination. The contradictions inherent in this representation came to the fore during the 1857 revolt.



In June 1857 the Gwalior Contingent rose in revolt. The *sipahis* had been growing restive since the last week of May. As news of events at Meerut and Delhi as well as other centres of rebellion reached the Sindia capital, Gwalior troops geared themselves for a fresh onslaught against the company. By 14 June British officers of the Contingent had been overthrown. Several Europeans were killed or had to flee the city. There were elements among the Gwalior rebels who favoured a general massacre of the English, but were restrained from adopting this course by the *sipahi* leadership.¹³ Unfortunately the full potential of the strategic advantage gained by the Sindia soldiers was never realized. They were preempted by Jiyaji Rao who announced that henceforth the troops would serve directly under him. The maharaja undertook to pay their salaries regularly and 'never declined in clear terms to lead them against the British'.¹⁴ On the one hand, this robbed the troops of their autonomy and on the other gave the beleaguered British some breathing space. In the words of Sen, 'Sindhia had rendered a great service to his friends. A formidable body of well-trained and well-armed rebels, whose intervention could at different times decide the fate of Agra, Delhi and Kanpur, sat idle in their lines at Morar [the Gwalior cantonment] when the British were slowly restoring their authority over North India.'¹⁵ For a whole year after the uprising of 14 June 1857 the Gwalior Contingent did not actively participate as a body in the campaigns of the rebels. It was only after the fall of Jhansi and Kalpi in 1858 that Gwalior became the base of rebel leaders. At the end of May 1858, Tatya Tope, Nana Sahib's nephew Rao Sahib, Rani Lakshmi Bai and Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda assumed leadership of the Gwalior troops. Jiyaji Sindia fled to the protection of the company. In mid-June the British army launched a major operation to capture Gwalior. In the intense fighting that ensued Rani Lakshmi Bai

augmented the reputation for extraordinary heroism which she had already acquired. She died in the thick of battle. The Rani charging on horseback remains one of the most enduring images of the Great Revolt. On 20 June 1858 Jiyaji was escorted back to his capital by British troops.

And where was Baiza Bai in the midst of this turmoil? Very much in Gwalior; she had arrived from Ujjain in 1856, was caught in the events of 1857 and remained there till the beginning of 1858. Alongwith Jiyaji she too sought British protection and returned only after the maharaja had been reinstated. Baiza Bai stayed on in the Sindia capital till her death in 1863. It is unlikely that a statesman of her standing had no advice to offer to the inexperienced maharaja in the critical situation of 1857. It would not be too far off the mark to say that surely the clever stratagem resorted to by Jiyaji was inspired by her. Baiza Bai's hold over Gwalior had steadily increased after her homecoming in 1848. S.C. Macpherson, the political agent at Gwalior, commented in 1854 that Baiza Bai's influence at the court arose 'from her great wealth, from the Maharaja's being her expectant heir, from the presence of her grandchildren in his Palace, from her veteran skill in plots ...'.¹⁶ During the fifties the Bai had been working hard to dislodge the chief administrative official of the durbar, Diwan Dinkar Rao, so as to consolidate her own position. Dinkar Rao was a toady of the first order, and was the main instrument for upholding colonial interests in the Sindia raj.¹⁷ In this endeavour Baiza Bai had the support of a strong anti-Dinkar Rao lobby comprising 'the most active and powerful classes in the community, the body of Pundits [Maharashtrian Brahmins], that of moneylenders and the whole tribe of public functionaries'.¹⁸ Dinkar Rao had initiated a series of measures which had undermined the traditional standing of the middle- and lower-level bureaucracy. These sections therefore earnestly 'looked to his downfall'.¹⁹ The hostility towards Dinkar Rao was, of course, a reflection of popular resentment over British interference in the internal affairs of the Gwalior state.

In 1857–8 Dinkar Rao pushed for an actively pro-British line and worked out the finer details of the maharaja's policy towards the Gwalior troops. Eventually Baiza Bai too compromised and committed herself to

Dinkar Rao's line. This does not necessarily imply that she adopted this stance right at the outset. It was not possible to come to terms with the unprecedented events of May–June 1857 with a readymade response. Some time was needed for reflection. Jiyaji's pretence of identifying with the soldiers initially kept the stand of the durbar ambiguous. It would be wrong to regard the soldiers, with their highly motivated leadership, as being so gullible as to be taken in by the duplicity of their ruler. They were probably aware that the durbar was weighing its options:

Baiza Bai's asserted proceedings and speeches during the early period of the mutiny were the subject of much remark at the time: it is impossible to say what degree of truth there was in the statements and rumours then current on this head; but her name was certainly very freely used by emissaries from the Gwalior Lushkur, who were endeavouring to tamper with and incite the Contingent Troops at Morar to mutiny.²⁰

The *sipahis* were constantly engaged in discussing and reviewing their strategy. There was a section that throughout advocated a more militant attitude towards Sindia. But this section could have pressed for the acceptance of such a line only at the cost of a split in the Contingent.²¹

Whatever vacillation there might have been at the durbar, it did not last long. The ruling class of the state by and large decided not to join the struggle. Baiza Bai was finally part of this consensus. Significantly after Rao Sahib and Tatya Tope had taken over the leadership of the Gwalior *sipahis* they requested Baiza Bai (who was then in the British camp) to come to Gwalior to head the government. She chose to ignore the appeal.²² The rebels were not addressing Baiza Bai the person, but Baiza Bai the legend.

The capitulation of the dominant sections of the ruling class of the Sindia state was the outcome of a general assessment by the ruling classes of the Gwalior-Malwa region that the Revolt was a lost cause. The swiftness with which these classes rallied to the support, either openly or discreetly, of the British allowed the old aristocracy to survive after 1857. Barring a few minor instances, as for example the petty chief of Amjhera who had actively supported the rebels, none of the Malwa ruling families lost their states in the post-1857 arrangement. This capitulation of course came at a

price. Malwa, for all the potential that its economy had demonstrated in the early nineteenth century, remained relatively marginal to the process of capitalist development during the remaining period of colonial rule.

NOTES

1. 'Evidence given before the Hon'ble H.B. Devereux, Judicial Commissioner of Mysore, . . . , etc.', NAI, FD, Secret, 345/28 May 1858.
2. S.N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, New Delhi, 1957, p. 401.
3. P.C. Gupta, *Nana Sahib and the Rising at Cawnpore*, Oxford, 1963, p. 64.
4. Cf. Stirling to Stewart, 30 November 1827, NAI, FDP, 102/7 December 1827; Cavendish to Macnaghten, 7 February 1834, NAI, FDP, 13/3 April 1834.
5. Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, 'The Profile of a Saintly Rebel: Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 26, Nos. 1-4 (1998), p. 39.
6. *Ibid.*, n. 11.
7. Several Sufi preachers were active in Gwalior during the early nineteenth century. Participation by the ruling elite, including the royal family, in festivals (especially the annual *Urs*) at prominent Sufi dargahs, reinforced plebeian veneration of Sufis at Gwalior, enhancing their popular appeal and giving to their ideas a very wide audience. Cf. Daniel Gold, 'The Sufi Shrines of Gwalior City: Communal Sensibilities and the Accessible Exotic under Hindu Rule', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2005), pp. 127-50.
8. 'Baiza Bai Sindhia and a Deccan bund', Maharashtra Archives, *Bulletin of the Department of Archives*, No. 8 (1971), pp. 1-2.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 2, n. 1.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
13. Cf. Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Gwalior Contingent in 1857-58: The Organization and Ideology of the Sepoy Rebels', in Shireen Moosvi, ed., *Facets of the Great Revolt, 1857*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 59.
14. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 290.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
16. S.C. Macpherson, 'Report on Gwalior Affairs', 13 November 1854, NAI, CIA, Gwalior Residency, File no. 267, p. 41.
17. Dinkar Rao was one of the three Indians nominated to the governor general's legislative council under the Indian Councils Act of 1861.
18. Macpherson, 'Report on Gwalior Affairs', p. 11.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Meade to Government of India, 8 July 1863, NAI, FDP 'A', 21/August 1863.
21. For more details see Khan, 'Gwalior Contingent', pp. 62-4.
22. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 293.

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